United Nations S/PV.8052

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8052nd meeting
Thursday, 21 September 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Negewo	(Ethiopia)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Lemoyne
	Italy	Mr. Alfano
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Abdrakhmanov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Ms. Wallström
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Burt
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security

Letter dated 14 August 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/710)

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17-29567 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security

Letter dated 14 August 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/710)

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Ministers and other distinguished representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Djibouti, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/788, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Djibouti, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/710, which contains a letter dated 14 August 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2379 (2017).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Burt (United Kingdom): I am delighted to have cast the United Kingdom's vote in favour of resolution 2379 (2017), and I am grateful to Council members for their unanimous support of this United Kingdom-drafted text.

One year after we gathered on the margins of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly and promised to do all we could to bring Da'esh to justice, this resolution is a vital step towards achieving that profoundly necessary goal. As we vote in the Chamber, we think of the people who suffered so grievously at the hands of Da'esh — of the innocents whose homelands were overrun; of the millions who were forced to flee; of the suffering inflicted on those who stayed, many of whom were massacred or enslaved; of the civilians who died in terrorist attacks in Europe and around the world; and of the great cities that were occupied, pillaged and subjected to rule by terror.

There can never be adequate recompense for those who were forced to endure the wanton brutality of Da'esh, and the dead will not be brought back. But this resolution means that the international community is united in our belief that there should at least be accountability for those who perpetrated such wicked acts. The United Nations will now help to gather and preserve evidence of Da'esh's crimes in Iraq. I can announce that Britain will provide £1 million to establish the United Nations investigative team that will lead these efforts, and I would respectfully encourage other countries to contribute.

Bringing Da'esh to justice will be possible only because Iraq's courageous armed forces have liberated one city after another, including Mosul, and advanced with the support of many nations,

including my own, that sent their war planes into action against the terrorists, breaking Da'esh's grip on about three-quarters of the Iraqi territory it once occupied. Wherever Da'esh has been driven back in Iraq, the painstaking process of gathering evidence of its crimes can now proceed under the auspices of the United Nations. As the United Kingdom Commissioner for the International Commission on Missing Persons, set up after the conflict in former Yugoslavia, it is my hope that some of this evidence will help Iraqi families learn the fate and even find the remains of their loved ones, especially in the terrible mass graves that dot the lands which Da'esh occupied.

Britain has worked closely with the Government of Iraq to bring forward this resolution, and we will continue to work alongside the Government of Iraq and our partners to implement it, ensuring that the United Nations does everything possible to support domestic and international efforts to hold Da'esh to account. By striving for justice, we shall also be seeking to heal the sectarian divides that Da'esh has exploited and enflamed.

The defeat of Da'esh as a territorial entity is now within sight, but its downfall will not in itself create peace and stability. Lasting peace will be secured only once we have helped Iraq to overcome sectarian division and achieve the national unity that its people deserve. Justice is an essential requirement for reaching that goal, for it is justice that leads to reconciliation, and reconciliation is the only way to protect a society — any society — against extremists who would sow hatred and division.

That is why we must help Iraq to strengthen its justice system so as to ensure that all those who commit atrocities in the conflict are brought to justice. In the meantime, we know that bringing Da'esh to justice will take time, demanding patience and resolve from us all. But we owe it to those who have suffered to press ahead, however long the road might be, remembering that many offenders have been long prosecuted after they committed their crimes, as those in Srebrenica will remember.

I will close by reminding the Council of an old phrase — the millstones of justice turn exceeding slow, but they grind exceeding fine. Those millstones have begun moving today. I want to thank my friend the Foreign Minister and the Government of Iraq for our work together in making resolution 2379 (2017) a reality. Let us make the consequences of the resolution a reality, too, and bring some justice to those who have suffered for too long.

The President: I now invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy to take the floor.

Mr. Alfano (Italy): Today's vote in the Security Council is a very important step towards holding Da'esh accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Inhumanity has been the essence of the horrific offences perpetrated by Da'esh in its cruel ideology. Few times in history have we seen such deliberate and systematic acts of murder, kidnapping, suicide bombing, sexual violence, enslavement, the persecution of religious minorities and the destruction of cultural heritage. I salute the courage of the Iraqi people, who have made a huge sacrifice in the war on terror. I also praise the commitment of the Iraqi authorities to upholding the rule of law.

It was in the land of ancient Mesopotamia that the world was given its first written laws — the Code of Hammurabi. In the words of King Hammurabi, it was intended "to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers so that the strong should not harm the weak". However, no one today is seeking an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth, as in the old days of Hammurabi. We voted in favour of resolution 2379 (2017) to help achieve something more difficult — to eradicate impunity by law alone. That is accountability. At the same time, accountability means rejecting the temptation of revenge and retribution — for example, the risk of collective punishment outside of the law for entire families associated with Da'esh. That would not help our cause of upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We voted in favour of the resolution to support our Iraqi partners in investigating the atrocious crimes committed and in ensuring that the law is enforced and violations sanctioned swiftly. In fact, the fear of being caught is often a more powerful deterrent than the punishment itself. Therefore, we stand with Iraq in telling anyone who has joined or will join the cause of terror that they will be identified and that there will be serious consequences for their actions. We also stand with the victims and their families, who have suffered great pain and are still facing a huge humanitarian crisis because of Da'esh.

For all these reasons, Italy will do everything it can to ensure the success of the new investigative

team and its special envoy. As Council members know, Italy is a close partner of Iraq in the Global Coalition against Da'esh. We have helped train around 30,000 Iraqi military and police personnel. Many of those police officers have also been trained in anti-terrorism investigation to guarantee security, public order and the rule of law.

We are entering a new phase of cooperation with Iraq. We are winning the war on terror militarily, but where terrorism has left destruction and hatred we cannot win the peace without a long-term commitment to stabilization, inclusive political dialogue, reconciliation and accountability in the eyes of the law. Therefore, I believe that today's resolution is an important decision in the right direction, because the law is the pillar of our societies. Anyone who subjects other humans to acts that are less than human offends humankind and spreads insecurity in our international order, founded on the principle that respect for the law is the safeguard of human rights and fundamental liberties.

The President: I now invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden to take the floor.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): The nightmare of Da'esh rule is finally coming to an end for the millions of Iraqis who have been affected. The victory over Da'esh is a result of the commitment and resilience of the Iraqi Government and people. I pay tribute to them and to the Iraqi security forces for their determination. Yet, in some ways the victory over Da'esh is — as we have heard already — only the beginning of a long road ahead. The hard work of healing the wounds of the survivors, as well as the wounds left on Iraqi society, must now begin.

Sweden welcomes today's adoption of resolution 2379 (2017), which is an important first step towards holding those responsible for the atrocities carried out by Da'esh to account. We welcome the global advocacy role of the Special Advisor established by this resolution, as well as the fact that other Member States can request assistance from the team with the approval of the Security Council.

Today's resolution is also an example of how the Security Council can take action in support of accountability. That is encouraging because to date, advancing international justice in the Council has sometimes been difficult, not least with respect to Syria. Accountability is critical to delivering on the Council's aims of reconciliation and sustaining peace. Let me make three short points relating to the resolution we have just adopted and its implementation.

First, Da'esh has shown an extraordinary cruelty towards men, women and children. Today, I would like to remind the Council that women and children have been used as human shields, executed in public, abducted, enslaved, raped, sold like livestock and exploited as suicide bombers. We have heard heartbreaking stories from Yazidis, as well as stories from people from other religious groups, that testify to such barbaric acts. We would like to convey our respect to a courageous survivor of such acts, Ms. Nadia Murad, who is present with us today.

Today's action by the Council marks a victory for the women who have survived Da'esh and who have bravely spoken out to demand justice. I pay tribute to their courage. We must now ensure that the investigative team is equipped with the expertise and resources necessary to gather evidence of crimes against women and children, including sexual and gender-based violence.

Secondly, Sweden was among the first countries to prosecute suspected perpetrators of alleged war crimes in Iraq and Syria.

Finally, we urge the Iraqi authorities to put in place national legislation that ensures all perpetrators of international crimes are tried in Iraq. All suspected war crimes must be afforded due process, and investigated in an impartial and fair way. That is essential for the maintenance of the rule of law and crucial for the reconciliation process. Sweden, which is unequivocally opposed to the death penalty, expects that the investigative team will not contribute to trials that may lead to capital punishment, in line with United Nations standards. We welcome the work of the United Nations to support the Iraqi authorities' efforts to reform their justice sector, strengthen the rule of law and the respect for human rights.

After the military defeat of Da'esh and the end of its brutal rule, the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people must turn their attention to reconciliation and building an Iraqi State that represents all Iraqis. That will take political courage and cooperation. They can rely on Sweden as a committed partner in the upcoming critical phase.

The President: I now invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan to take the floor.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): I would like to express our sincere gratitude for the determined commitment demonstrated by the Governments of Iraq and the United Kingdom, which resulted in today's unanimous adoption of the landmark resolution 2379 (2017). The resolution also indicates our wholehearted endorsement of international efforts to combat the common evil of terrorism that is confronting the entire international community. The liberation of Mosul, the last stronghold of Da'esh in Iraq, by Iraqi and coalition forces was received in Kazakhstan and its entire region with great satisfaction, as well as with deep sorrow given the high price paid for the victory by the long-suffering Iraqi people.

The adoption of today's resolution supporting the launch of an investigative team to hold the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) accountable is an important milestone in bringing the terrorist group to justice for all of the atrocities committed in the territory of Iraq and beyond. The collection analysis tools used and the preservation of credible evidence will serve to implement the principle of the inevitability of the prosecution and punishment of members of Da'esh, wherever they may be, for committing atrocious crimes against humanity, war crimes, terrorism and crimes against children, women and civilians. We also hold the perpetrators responsible for the destruction of cultural heritage sites. My delegation has high expectations of the investigative team to be established pursuant to the resolution. We join other Security Council members in calling on all interested States to cooperate with the team.

The adopted resolution contains the key elements to effectively hold Da'esh to account and prosecute the transnational terrorist group. The courage and consolidation of Iraqi society required for the liberation of Mosul commands our respect and confidence that the Iraqi people will also be united in establishing the rule of law in the country and in restoring all that has been destroyed. The unfailing national solidarity and sacrifice made for their country will also, over time, return refugees to their homes, normalizing life, rehabilitating victims of ISIL — among whom, sadly, there are many families from our part of the world — and promoting sustainable development. It is obvious that only the elimination of socioeconomic factors that give rise to terrorism will prevent the return of chaos, suffering and irreparable loss among the civilian population and give them new hope for a better future.

Kazakhstan is firmly convinced that a holistic and systematic approach by the international community, represented by the States Members of the United Nations and international organizations could be a solution to the complex phenomenon of international terrorism. Over the course of its implementation, such a strategy would ensure responsibility and accountability for the entire chain of terrorist groups, including organizers, ideologues, militants, their financiers and other accomplices. It is very important for my country and for all of Central Asia that we start work today in order to prevent a spillover of terrorist activity to the currently stable parts of our community. Kazakhstan, which deeply believes in human dignity, justice and freedom, joins other Member States in striving to uphold and fully implement today's resolution, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Ms. Haley (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Sir, for your leadership at this meeting.

The idea of seeking justice for victims of genocide, crimes against humanity and other atrocity crimes had its beginning in the years following the Second World War. Nothing could replace the lives lost or make families whole again, but by holding perpetrators to account for their crimes, a measure of justice was provided to the victims and the loved ones they left behind. By acting here today, we cannot restore the lives, the dignity or the innocence of the victims of crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), but by taking such an important step towards holding ISIL accountable for its many unspeakable crimes we can achieve justice. In time, that will hopefully begin a process of healing.

It may have taken a long time to get here, but today's resolution 2379 (2017) is a landmark. It is a major first step towards addressing the death, suffering and injury of the victims of crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq. The crimes include genocide. The victims had been Yazidis, Christians, Shia and Sunni Muslims and many, many more. In the long history of human beings committing atrocities against their fellow human beings, the crimes of ISIL stand out, especially the brutality they have inflicted on girls and women. Thousands of Yazidi women and girls have been kidnapped by ISIL and then bought and sold like animals. I have met with some of those women. The victims of rape and sexual slavery

are understandably reluctant to speak out publicly, but thanks to what we do here today, the world will still hear about their suffering.

The investigative team created by today's resolution is part of a comprehensive approach to holding ISIL accountable for its atrocities against the Iraqi people. Working with Iraq and other partners, it will expose the depravity of ISIS and provide an indispensable record of the scope and scale of its criminality. With victory over ISIS in Iraq on the horizon, that record will play an important role as Iraqis attempt to reconcile this painful period in their national life. The team will help to identify victims and perpetrators and ensure that the perpetrators face the justice they so richly deserve, while giving victims their day in court. Through that, we hope and pray that the Iraqi people can begin the process of returning to peaceful, normal, everyday lives.

The United States was honoured to work alongside its Iraqi and British partners over the past year to make resolution 2379 (2017) a reality. We thank them for their dedication in seeing it through. While today's resolution is specifically about the transnational threat that ISIS represents, we support accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and for human rights violations and abuses. Above all, we thank the Iraqi Government and Prime Minister Al-Abadi for taking an important first step towards demonstrating that justice is never beyond reach, no victim is voiceless and no perpetrator is above the law.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We believe firmly that the crimes of the terrorists of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) should not go unpunished, regardless of where they are committed. We welcome the successes of the Iraqi armed forces in their fight against ISIL and in restoring their country's sovereignty. We are ready to continue supporting the efforts of the Iraqi leadership on both the political and practical fronts.

The threat of ISIL should be eradicated wherever its terrorists wreak havoc, and we must act as a united front in doing so. Resolution 2379 (2017), which we just adopted, notes the global nature of that threat and the unity of Security Council members in combating it. But our efforts will succeed only on a solid foundation of international law that does not disregard the sovereignty of States that have been victim to terrorist attacks but rather cooperates with them. The Russian aerospace forces' operation in Syria is based on such principles, which is key to their effectiveness. We would like to emphasize once again the importance of strengthening States' coordination and cooperation in the effort to destroy ISIL, Jabhat Al-Nusra and terrorist groups linked to them, and without any appearance of double standards, including in the implementation of justice.

As we understand it, today's resolution, which provides for the creation of a team to collect, preserve and store evidence of crimes committed by ISIL terrorists in Iraq, was discussed in detail with the country's authorities, and we commend that approach. Regrettably, that has not always been the case, as when, for example, the initiators of an illegitimate General Assembly resolution on a similar structure in Syria did not even consider the necessity of consulting Damascus. We once again urge the Secretary-General and Member States to refrain from supporting the so-called International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, which is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

In the current circumstances, which include putting military pressure on ISIL, developing national criminal justice mechanisms based on universally recognized standards is a priority. Resolution 2379 (2017) demands that we ensure that there is not the smallest possibility that terrorists can avoid facing justice. It is important that all of their crimes, whatever category they fall into — including first and foremost terrorists' own acts — be punished with no possibility for impunity and in accordance with the seriousness of the crime. However, the primary responsibility for bringing terrorists to justice still belongs to the Governments of the States that are affected by such evil acts. In our view, today's resolution in no way undermines that tenet and creates no new precedents. We are considering it in a context of criminal rather than international humanitarian law. We welcome the Government of Iraq's intention to strengthen its national criminal justice system and hope that the team set up by the Council will contribute to that endeavour, while acting impartially, transparently and fully in keeping with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Lemoyne (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Ethiopian presidency for giving the Security Council this opportunity to reaffirm

its determination to fight terrorism and support the Iraqi people and authorities on their path to peace, stability and unity. And I would like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, who is here with us this morning.

On Tuesday, in his address to the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.4), President Emmanuel Macron brought up the subject of the duty we have to speak for those who go unheard and whose voices are forgotten. For example, we have all heard the voice of Nadia Murad, the Yazidi victim who is seeking justice through the establishment of an investigation mechanism, and I would like to thank those who made sure that we heard her voice in the Assembly (see A/71/PV.3).

Eradicating Da'esh and stabilizing Iraq are major priorities for France, which will continue to support the reconstruction of Iraq with the goal of achieving a lasting peace that can reconcile every element of Iraqi society, as Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, France's Minister for Foreign Affairs, committed to in Baghdad. The Council's unanimous adoption today of resolution 2379 (2017), proposed by the United Kingdom in response to a request from the Iraqi Prime Minister, will enable the United Nations to support the Iraqi authorities in collecting evidence of serious crimes committed by Da'esh through the deployment of an investigative team. Such crimes are intolerable and ineradicable, and the proof of that must not be erased with the passing of time. Nor must they go unpunished. We owe that to the far too high number of victims of this terrorist organization in Iraq.

We welcome today's resolution, which represents a concrete contribution to justice on the part of the Security Council. It is a major first step and a sign that the consolidation of the rule of law in Iraq is under way, with France's full support. In that regard, France reiterates its support to the Iraqi Government in combating impunity for any crime, whoever commits it, within a framework of independent and impartial judicial institutions and with all the necessary procedural safeguards for human rights.

The Council is aware of France's commitment to respect for human rights and its unconditional rejection of the death penalty. It will be essential to ensure that the evidence collected by the United Nations investigative team is used in procedures that conform to those requirements, in accordance with United Nations practices. Those requirements should be reflected in the investigative team's terms of reference, and we urge it to work in close coordination with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the relevant international criminal justice mechanisms and the competent national jurisdictions.

Justice and the rule of law are a corollary of lasting peace and stability in Iraq. This new chapter in Iraq will be possible only with the resolute commitment of all to work together on issues of governance and national reconciliation so as to ensure that everyone has a place in the Iraq of tomorrow. That is needed if Da'esh is to be fully defeated, and until that long-awaited moment, today's vote is a useful and valuable symbol.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I would like begin by thanking the United Kingdom for initiating today's resolution 2379 (2017) and for taking a number of suggestions on board, including from my delegation.

As the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continues to lose territory, there are many challenges that the Government of Iraq has to tackle to ensure post-conflict restoration. They include rebuilding vitally important infrastructure, carrying out national reconciliation, facilitating the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and ensuring respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and international humanitarian law. Bringing to justice those who made the country and its people suffer from acts of terrorism is also high on the list of priorities. Therefore, this resolution is a welcome and much anticipated initiative which gives Iraq the necessary support in addressing this issue with the aid of the United Nations investigative team. It will put at Iraq's disposal available international and regional mechanisms for judicial cooperation and technical assistance in investigating terrorist crimes and gathering credible evidence quickly before perpetrators can cover up their wrongdoings. It will facilitate and streamline the international community's efforts in assisting the country with strengthening the capacity of its law enforcement and judicial bodies.

I should like to raise a few points with regard to the implementation of the present resolution.

First, the team should cooperate fully with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and international and regional governmental and non-governmental organizations that can assist in collecting evidence and testimony on the crimes committed in Iraq by ISIL.

Secondly, unprecedented numbers of foreign terrorist fighters among ISIL's ranks make the crimes perpetrated by them transnational. Therefore, for the sake of efficiently apprehending and prosecuting those terrorists, we encourage the Government of Iraq to join efforts with other States and share the evidence collected by the team without any limits or reservations.

Thirdly, these pieces of evidence have to be admissible not only to the Iraqi national courts, but also to the courts of other States upon their request. For this purpose, the team has to conduct its work in accordance with universally recognized standards for collecting evidence.

Last but not least, it is imperative that all those responsible for committing crimes against the civilian population, in particular violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of human rights, be held accountable without any preconditions. Victims of those crimes deserve nothing less. In this regard, we call on the Iraqi authorities to meticulously observe due process and uphold human rights, in particular the right to a fair trial, as there can be no place for victor's justice.

Finally, Ukraine stands ready to further contribute to the cost of accountability for terrorist crimes committed by ISIL.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2379 (2017).

The Iraqi Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Al Abadi, has made substantial progress in advancing institutional reform of the Government, promoting national reconciliation, easing the humanitarian situation and fostering economic development. China commends those efforts. We hope that Iraq will achieve national security and stability at an early date and that the Iraqi people will soon lead a peaceful and stable life.

The terrorist acts in Iraq committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) seriously threaten the peace and security of Iraq, as well as those of the region and the world. China commends the Iraqi Government for its unrelenting efforts in combatting ISIL and the progress it has achieved in combatting terrorism. China supports Iraq in its efforts to bring ISIL members to justice, in accordance with its domestic laws, and supports the international community in providing assistance to the Iraqi Government at its request.

Resolution 2379 (2017) specifies the principle of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and unity of Iraq, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; establishes an investigative team to assist the Iraqi Government in collecting evidence of ISIL's crimes committed in Iraq; and emphasizes that the investigative team shall respect the sovereignty and jurisprudence of Iraq and carry out its responsibilities strictly in accordance with the mandate requested by Iraq, and that the Iraqi Government must agree to the use of evidence.

The Iraqi Government recognizes the content of the resolution and China supports this. We hope that the resolution will be implemented effectively and play a constructive role in strengthening the capacity-building of the Iraqi Government in seeking accountability for terrorist organizations in Iraq.

The international counter-terrorism situation remains serious. Terrorist organizations, such as ISIL and Al-Qaida, are conducting terrorist activities and spreading extremist ideologies in many different ways. The international community should strengthen cooperation, support all counter-terrorism efforts, including those of Iraq, unify standards, adopt effective measures, and resolutely combat terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council.

China shall continue to work with Iraq and all other countries in a joint effort to make new progress in international counter-terrorism cooperation.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and the delegation of the United Kingdom for its work in promting the adoption of resolution 2379 (2017). We also extend our greetings to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, Mr. Ibrahim Abdulkarim Al-Jafari, who is joining us at today's meeting. I also welcome Ambassador Nadia Murad, who is also at this meeting.

Bolivia voted in favour of the resolution adopted today because it believes that the fight against Da'esh, as led by the Iraqi people, deserves the full support not only of the Security Council, but also of the entire membership of our Organization. We wish to express our most sincere recognition of the brave, self-sacrificing and determined struggle waged by the Iraqi people and security forces in general and continue

to wage in order to definitely eradicate Da'esh from the Republic of Iraq. It is a battle they are fighting on behalf of all of us.

It is important to bear in mind that the brutality of Da'esh continues to take the lives of innocent people. It is not only a regional threat, as we saw with the attack perpetrated on 14 September, in which more than 80 people lost their lives in southern Iraq; it is also a global threat, as we recently saw in Barcelona, Afghanistan, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Belgium and France.

We believe that the resolution just adopted must undoubtedly be implemented in the framework of full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Iraq, and as a complement to the efforts of Government institutions, so that the Da'esh perpetrators of atrocities — which include crimes against humanity, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law — can be duly investigated, tried and punished.

We hope that the work and evidence collected by the investigative team will contribute to bringing justice to the Iraqi people and to all the victims of the atrocities committed by Da'esh around the world. We also hope that this work will make it possible to bring to justice the perpetrators of illicit trafficking and the destruction of cultural heritage, such as the 21 June attack on the Great Mosque of Al-Nuri, whose incalculable historical and cultural value is an irreparable loss for the historical heritage of Iraq and of humankind as a whole. It is an unfortunate testament to the savagery of Da'esh.

Bolivia once again condemns in the strongest terms any act of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of where, when and by whom it is committed; and reaffirms that all States must fight terrorism by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Reconciliation is not synonymous with forgetting; reconciliation is not synonymous with impunity. Reconciliation is synonymous with satisfaction with the right to truth, the right to justice, the right to reparations and the right for these acts to never be repeated.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, the Senegalese delegation would like to thank the Ethiopian presidency for having organized this meeting. We also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Abdulkarim Al-Jafari, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, among us this morning.

Senegal was a sponsor of resolution 2379 (2017), which the Security Council has just adopted unanimously in order to reaffirm the position that all of us here share as a community of nations regarding the reprehensible nature of terrorism and violent extremism, in particular the actions of and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), known as Da'esh, an organization that now more than ever appears to pose a global threat.

With the setting up of the investigative team led by a Special Adviser, in implementation of the mandate that has just been adopted, the United Nations will be able to lend the necessary assistance to the Iraqi authorities to gather evidence on the basis of the highest standards in the field on acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide committed by ISIL. This will help shed light on the truth and facilitate the necessary process of bringing the perpetrators to justice. It also opens the door to interesting prospects in terms of cooperation with Member States in the field of international criminal justice concerning acts carried out by Da'esh.

Though this resolution, we are also showing our active solidarity with the people and the Government of Iraq, to which we wish to reiterate our sincere congratulations for the decisive victories they have achieved in the fight against ISIL. We have no doubt that with the ongoing support of the international community, including the United Nations, through its United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the Iraqi authorities will continue their efforts aimed at reconciliation so as to eradicate in a lasting way ISIL's ideology.

By way of conclusion, I would like to convey my gratitude to the delegation of the United Kingdom for its ongoing efforts during the whole process of negotiations, which, of course, enabled us to achieve this outcome, which is a harbinger of great hope for the many victims who deserve that justice be done.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2379 (2017) and is pleased to have co-sponsored it. I would like to express my gratitude to the United Kingdom for having taken the lead on drafting this important resolution.

We support the resolution's setting up of an investigative team to assist Iraq in collecting evidence of the crimes committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), including those that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Collecting and preserving evidence is essential in order to bring the perpetrators of those crimes to justice in future.

We strongly hope that through its impartial and independent investigation, the team will help Iraq in preventing violent extremism and in promoting national reconciliation among the people.

Japan will continue to stand with the people of Iraq in fighting violent extremism.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We commend the presence in this Chamber of a number of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Ministers. We also extend our greetings to Ms. Nadia Murad, to whom we pay heartfelt tribute for her dignity and courage. We thank the United Kingdom and Iraq for their leadership in negotiating resolution 2379 (2017), which we just adopted today unanimously.

Uruguay voted in favour of the resolution and co-sponsored it because it views it as an important initiative that seeks to bring to justice the members of the Da'esh terrorist group, who are responsible for the worst possible crimes.

War crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide cannot go unpunished under any circumstance, wherever such acts may be committed. The crimes committed by Da'esh cannot and should not be exceptions to this rule. Their actions should be punished with full force of law.

Respect for human rights and justice are two concepts that are intrinsically linked. Ensuring justice for victims and their families and protecting all members of a society, without ethnic, religious or gender-based distinction, is a duty of States. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights indicates in its preamble indicates that freedom, justice and peace in the world are based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.

Example-setting can also be an important factor. In addition to the efforts undertaken by the Iraqi Government to military combat Da'esh, bringing to justice its leaders and members who are responsible for having committed crimes will contribute to discrediting the group, making the heinous nature of its actions known to public opinion, with positive effects in terms of dissuading anyone who might have been otherwise attracted to this group.

For that reason, we believe that the request for international assistance made by the Government of Iraq, aimed at collecting and preserving evidence that will make it possible to bring to justice the members of Da'esh who have perpetrated such crimes on its territory, deserves the support and attention of the Council and the United Nations as a whole.

We trust that similar support will also be provided when the time comes for accountability, because that time will come in connection with the crimes committed in Syria, Somalia, Yemen and, unfortunately, so many other areas.

Uruguay deems it key to eliminate discrimination and sexual violence against women in all arenas. The widespread and systematic use of sexual violence against girls and women as a weapon of war and its use by terrorists as a terror tactic deserves the strongest condemnation by all societies without distinction of any kind. Such condemnation must be effective and translated into action. We believe that it is key that the investigative team have at least one expert on the issue of gender, sexual violence and the protection of children.

Finally, we would like to recall at this time the importance of international legal cooperation in the fight against terrorism, as stated in resolution 2322 (2016), which in its preambular part underscores the importance of strengthening international cooperation by investigators, prosecutors and judges to prevent and investigate terrorist acts and bring their perpetrators to justice.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate Ethiopia on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month of September. I would like to thank the United Kingdom for its initiative and efforts throughout the past month, which led to resolution 2379 (2017), which we have just adopted. I wish also to congratulate Iraq, that brotherly country, for its contribution to this important step towards holding Da'esh accountable for the crimes it committed in Iraq.

The crimes committed by Da'esh in Iraq and in other places where it exists are unprecedented in their

criminality and cruelty. They make no distinction between children, women and the elderly. Hence it is imperative to ensure accountability for these crimes, either to seek justice for innocent victims or as deterrence. Accountability should not be limited to the direct perpetrators of these crimes. Those who incite, finance or provide weapons or safe haven, or facilitate the commission of such crimes, should also be held accountable.

In that vein, we stress that holding accountable those responsible for the crimes committed in the name of ISIS in Iraq is a crucial aspect in fighting terrorism in that brotherly country, and is a vital element in the framework of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Resolution 2379 (2017) includes a number of provisions related to the establishment of the investigative team, which will collect evidence related to crimes committed by ISIS. The team will help in the relevant investigations.

Since Egypt was briefed on this topic a year ago, as well as throughout consultations on the resolution, Egypt has insisted on respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and the independence of its judiciary. It has stressed that Iraq must approve the provisions and details of the resolution. Furthermore, Egypt has also emphasized that the approval of any country other than Iraq should be obtained before the new team takes any action or initiate investigations related to nationals of those other countries.

I would also like to stress that accountability for ISIS in Iraq is an important step towards achieving intercommunal reconciliation. That would prevent the re-emergence of ISIS and any other terrorist organization. In addition, the international community should move ahead in its efforts to rebuild areas liberated from ISIS in order to shore up Iraq's capacities, in particular in the areas of the judiciary, security and counter-terrorism in general. In carrying out those tasks, it should adhere to the principle of national ownership.

In that context, I stress that Egypt, as Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, has focused on building the capacities of Iraq to counter terrorism and hold accountable those responsible for crimes committed in that country. The Committee held a number of meetings in Iraq with donors, and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate has visited Bagdad on numerous occasions to support Iraq's efforts to combat terrorism.

Today's resolution sends an important message to terrorists that the international community is united and determined to eradicate terrorism, and a message to the international community that it must end any form of support for terrorism. The Council's adoption of a resolution holding ISIS accountable for its crimes is important. More important still, however, is the political will of States to implement this and other relevant resolutions concerning counter-terrorism.

The Council should closely follow the implementation of the resolution and hold accountable those States that do not fully comply and those that continue to support terrorism and shelter terrorists. I stress that Egypt will maintain its commitment to being at the forefront of the international community's efforts to defeat terrorism. Egypt will take all possible measures in accordance with the international law to counter terrorism and deal with those States supporting it.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia.

We welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2379 (2017), on ensuring the accountability of members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/ Da'esh for their crimes in Iraq, including those that may amount to crimes against humanity. We would like to thank the penholder, the United Kingdom, for all its efforts on this text.

The adoption of this resolution today is indeed an appropriate response to the request made by the Iraqi Government calling for the assistance of the international community to ensure accountability for members of Da'esh and the crimes that they have committed. We would like to take this opportunity to express appreciation to the Government of Iraq for all its efforts in that regard. The presence today of the Foreign Minister of Iraq demonstrates the importance that his Government attaches to this matter.

Without any doubt, ISIL/Da'esh continues to pose a global threat to international peace and security, and that does not require lengthy explanations. It is self-evident. Through the commission of acts involving murder, kidnapping, hostage-taking, suicide bombings and the destruction of cultural heritage, Da'esh has committed very serious crimes that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide. We

will never forget the loss of our Ethiopian compatriots who were mercilessly massacred by ISIL in Libya, and that is why we supported this resolution, which aims to hold members of ISIL/Da'esh accountable for the crimes committed in Iraq. Its resolution is indeed very significant not only in its role to address the plight of the victims and serve justice, but also to assist significantly in countering terrorism and violent extremism. The proper collection and preservation of evidence related to crimes that have been committed by ISIL/Da'esh is indeed critical to ensuring accountability.

In that regard, we support the establishment of an investigative team, headed by a special adviser, to support Iraqi efforts through collecting and preserving evidence of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by ISIL/Da'esh in Iraq. We therefore believe that should be done with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and its jurisdiction over crimes committed in its territory. In the light of the severity of the crimes committed by Da'esh and the magnitude of the challenges that the country is facing, Iraq will need the appropriate technical support and capacity-building. We understand that it is in that context that the resolution encourages Member States and regional and intergovernmental organizations to provide the appropriate legal assistance and capacity-building to the Government of Iraq so as to strengthen its courts and judicial system.

Let me therefore conclude by expressing our full support for efforts to ensure accountability for members of ISIL/Da'esh for all the crimes they have committed not only in Iraq, but also in other parts of the world.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Jafari (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): If I may, at the outset I should like to congratulate Ethiopia on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and thank it for its work in convening this meeting. I would also like to thank Egypt for its work during its presidency of the Council last month.

On 19 September 2016, we held a high-level meeting (see S/PV.7715) at Headquarters in which Iraq, the United Kingdom and Belgium, among others, participated. On that occasion, we demonstrated the unity of the international community by condemning the grave human rights violations committed by Da'esh terrorist gangs in Iraq and pledged to bring the perpetrators to justice. Today's historic resolution 2379 (2017) is the result of constructive cooperation and a clear understanding between Iraq and the United Kingdom. Its goal is to establish legal foundations for an international mechanism that respects Iraq's sovereignty and its jurisdiction in the area of evidence-collection in order to prosecute terrorists before international courts for their grave crimes in Iraq and other countries in the world.

The Council is well aware of the fact that the Iraqi judicial system dates back to the Code of Hammurabi, established between 1792-1742 B.C, which became the world's penal code.

Iraq applauds the efforts of the United Kingdom to work with Iraq, in Baghdad and New York, over the past months in order to come up with draft a resolution that would respond to Iraq's concerns. We would like to extend our special thanks to the Permanent Representative and his team at the British Mission in New York, as well as the team working at the British Embassy in Baghdad. Both worked tirelessly and with great professionalism with the Permanent Representative and his team at our Mission to the United Nations to reach a consensus-based and balanced text.

Iraq appreciates the valuable contributions made by Member States of the Security Council during the negotiations on the resolution 2379, which no doubt enhanced the language of the resolution in both substance and form. We would also like to thank them for their understanding and response to Iraq's request for international assistance in the area of evidence collection concerning the crimes committed by Da'esh.

The Council is aware of the magnitude of the sacrifices, the human losses and the destruction as a result of the war against terrorism in Iraq. That destruction did not occur in Iraq alone, however. Wherever Da'esh enters, destruction and chaos follow. We cannot afford to relinquish what we have achieved together in this war. We cannot afford to renounce the huge sacrifices made by our people. We have lived a bitter experience in Iraq, with the suffering and atrocities endured by civilians, in particular minorities — including Christians, Yazidis, Sabians, Turkmen and Shabak — as well as the oppression of women and children in areas under the control of Da'esh. The international community must consider the

gravity of this experience for humankind. We must do all we can to prevent it from happening again anywhere else in the world.

Resolution 2379 (2017), intended to hold Da'esh accountable, is a victory for human justice as well as for the victims. It is a concrete manifestation of rejection of the brutality of Da'esh and effective condemnation of its deviant behavior. Prosecuting Da'esh criminals and bringing them to justice will send a message of deterrance to those criminals, while also sending one of reassurance to all our peoples.

When we called for a Security Council resolution to prosecute Da'esh, we were well aware that it would be a very effective form of deterrence. This serves as a firm warning to the financiers of this gang and its ideological, financial and media supporters.

Resolution 2379 (2017) is based on solid foundations and a clear framework of full respect for Iraq's sovereignty and its jurisdiction in the field of criminal evidence-collection about crimes committed by Da'esh, including the international mechanism for a joint investigative team, to include Iraqi judges and international experts. Those foundations consist of the following pillars.

The first entails international assistance for Iraq in the area of evidence collection, in line with robust international legal standards concerning international crimes that do not fall under the purview of the Iraqi penal law.

Secondly, the resolution calls for the team to ensure that international legal expertise is shared with Iraqi experts and judges, who better understand the Iraqi legal system duly applicable to such investigations.

Thirdly, Iraq would like to assist other countries whose nationals might be members of Da'esh by sharing evidence with them, in accordance with the measures stipulated in the terms of reference of the agreement between Iraq and the Secretariat, with a view to holding Da'esh gangs accountable globally, in line with the global campaign to bring Da'esh to justice.

Fourthly, the success of the global campaign to bring the leaders of Da'esh to justice requires serious cooperation among all States Members of the United Nations, including sharing information they have about Da'esh criminals in accordance with the mechanism for mutual legal assistance between the investigative team and the State concerned. Iraq made sure that this provision was included in the wording of resolution 2379 (2017) so as to highlight the importance of respecting State sovereignty in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

Fifthly, we call on Member States and international and regional organizations to provide all possible assistance to the team so as to strengthen Iraq's legal and judicial system and promote the rule of law and end impunity.

Sixthly, during the negotiations on resolution 2379 (2017), Iraq underlined that the terms of reference for the work of the investigation team in Iraq must be acceptable to the Iraqi Government. That total consent illustrates respect for national sovereignty and Iraq's jurisdiction over crimes committed in Iraq against Iraqi nationals. We will work with the Secretariat to ensure that those terms are suitable for the team to carry out its work effectively in accordance with the resolution.

The Iraqi Government will work with the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General, who will lead the investigative team in a constructive manner. We will do that in way that facilitates his work in Iraq pursuant to the mandate conferred upon him. We will provide him with the necessary assistance to ensure his success in implementing his mission.

In that regard, the Government of Iraq calls on the international community to provide the Special Adviser with as much assistance as possible to socially reintegrate and rehabilitate survivors of terrorism and violence, including through training programmes, so that they can overcome the devastating impact of the psychological and physical suffering that they had to endure.

Finally, I would like to state that victory in Iraq is the result of the unity of Iraq and all its constituent people — Muslims and Christians, Shias and Sunnis, Arabs and Kurds and Turkmen, and Yazidis and Sabians — an unprecedented illustration of a united Iraq. At the same time, that victory was a reflection of the unity among the States represented om the international coalition.

For the first time, the countries of the world are standing together to fight a common enemy: Da'esh. In this very Chamber in September 2014, I delivered my first speech after Da'esh entered Mosul. And here we are now. We have come a long way, with milestones marked by bloodshed, sacrifice, economic destruction and

devastated towns. Yet the result is still the same, and the facts are unchanged. The will of Iraq and of the world's peoples prevailed against Da'esh, our common enemy. We strive to achieve normalcy in our communities so that citizens can be reassured and refugees and the displaced can return home. The road ahead will require serious, genuine cooperation to prevent the return of extremism, terrorism and terrorist crimes.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8053

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8053rd meeting
Thursday, 21 September 2017, 4.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Negewo	(Ethiopia)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wang Yi
	Egypt	Mr. Selim
	France	Mr. Lemoyne
	Italy	Mr. Alfano
	Japan	Mr. Kono
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Abdrakhmanov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzya
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Ms. Wallström
	Ukraine	Mr. Klimkin
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Field
	United States of America	Mr. Tillerson
	Uruguay	Mr. Loedel

Agenda

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

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The meeting was called to order at 4.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Ministers and other distinguished representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Republic of Korea to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on the agenda.

I now give the floor to Ms. Nakamitsu.

Ms. Nakamitsu: I thank you, Sir, for convening this very important meeting today.

The Security Council has been directly engaged in matters relating to weapons of mass destruction for 65 years. This long priority work by the Council has rested on two mutually reinforcing pillars. One derives from the Council's responsibility for establishing a system for the regulation of armaments, as enshrined in Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations. This objective is closely linked with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, and aims to promote international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources. The other derives, of course, from the Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Pursuant to this responsibility, the Council has sought various aims, including respect for the prohibition of the use of biological and chemical weapons, ensuring compliance with international norms and treaties, preventing non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and addressing specific cases of proliferation.

The Council's engagement on weapons of mass destruction has always been grounded on a common understanding that measures for disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin and are mutually reinforcing. The need to pursue both objectives while responding urgently to contemporary proliferation challenges was evident when the Council adopted the resolutions in support of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Similarly, when the Council met for the first time at the level of Heads of State and Government in 1992 (see S/PV.3046), disarmament and arms control were a major focus, and importantly determined that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction constituted a threat to international Peace and Security.

The disarmament and non-proliferation efforts of the Council over the past 25 years have achieved important and historic outcomes, even as the international community continues to grapple with isolated cases of proliferation and the unresolved question of disarmament. The Council has made use of a great variety of tools towards these ends. In this regard, I will briefly highlight a number of country-specific and general approaches.

In responding to the invasion of Kuwait in 1991, the Council required Iraq to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction programme and mandated on-site inspections towards that end. It has since been confirmed, of course, that those obligations were carried out and the Council has effectively normalized Iraq's international non-proliferation obligations.

With respect to the Iranian nuclear issue, direct engagement and a shared commitment to dialogue and cooperation resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which the Council endorsed in resolution 2231 (2015). Two years later, international inspectors continue to verify the implementation of Iran's nuclear-related commitments. A sustained commitment on the part of all participants remains essential to the long-term viability and success of that historic agreement.

In Libya, timely action by the Council enabled the international inspectors to help the Government secure and remove vulnerable stockpiles of chemical agents.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, successful engagement by the Russian Federation and the United States resulted in that country eliminating its declared chemical weapons programme under United Nations supervision and with unprecedented international cooperation.

Regrettably, we continue to find evidence of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons, which we determined has been carried out by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. In order to uphold our shared norms of humanity, all those who have used those weapons must be held to account. The unity and action of the Council remain essential.

Finally, the provocative and dangerous nuclear and ballistic missile activities by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continue to defy the decisions of the Council and the will of the international community. These acts have also undermined international norms against nuclear proliferation and nuclear testing. The Secretary-General has repeatedly and unequivocally condemned those acts, and called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease further testing, comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions, and allow space for the resumption of sincere dialogue on denuclearization. The steady escalation of provocative acts must be immediately reversed. The continued unity of the Council remains essential to facilitate the resumption of diplomacy, leading to a peaceful settlement.

Turning to general approaches on non-proliferation, resolution 1540 (2004) continues to stand as a pioneering achievement in cooperative action to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and related material by strengthening national capacities. In maintaining the effectiveness of this instrument, it remains imperative to keep pace with global trends and emerging technologies that continuously lower the threshold for the acquisition and use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material.

In concluding this survey, it is apparent that the most effective approaches to non-proliferation must involve a mixture of active, robust and wise diplomacy, strong international cooperation and a solid commitment to fully implementing the decisions of the Council. Addressing the threats and risks posed by weapons of mass destruction will also require new and creative efforts to complete unfinished business, including the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons.

I end my remarks with the words of the Secretary-General at the opening of the General Assembly general debate two days ago:

> "There is an urgent need to prevent proliferation, to promote disarmament and to preserve the gains made in these directions. Those goals are linked: progress on one will generate progress on the other." (*A/72/PV.3, p. 2*)

Mr. President: I thank Ms. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

I now invite Mr. Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State of the United States of America, to take the floor.

Mr. Tillerson (United States of America): I appreciate the opportunity to address the Security Council again, and I thank this month's presidency, Ethiopia.

Members of the Security Council often talk of threats to global security. The focus of today's Security Council meeting is an issue with worldwide implications — nuclear proliferation. At a time when stabbings, crudely constructed bombs and trucks driven into crowds of innocent men, women and children are often our enemies' weapons of choice to attack us, it is easy to become complacent and see the threat of nuclear attacks as a relic of the Cold War. The threat of a nuclear attack remains a grim reality, and those who would trigger such a horrific scenario pose a unique threat to peace-loving nations.

The challenge for each of us is: How can we decrease the threat posed by nuclear weapons, not just to our own people, but people worldwide? Today I want to put four points forward.

The first is to highlight the positive trajectory of nations that have voluntarily relinquished nuclear weapons. The second is to emphasize the moral burden of possessing nuclear weapons, and the enormous responsibility that accompanies stewardship of such devastating weapons, as well as the technologies and nuclear materials that go into them. The third is to make clear that acquiring nuclear-weapons capability does not provide security, prestige or other benefits, but instead represents a path to isolation and intense security scrutiny from the global community, as those responsible nuclear Powers will check such uncertain unpredictable threats. And lastly, all nations, but most particularly the current nuclear Powers, must recommit to sound nuclear-security practices and robust and effective non-proliferation efforts in order to keep nuclear weapons and associated materials and technology out of the hands of irresponsible nations, terrorists and non-State actors.

There are historical precedents of nations abandoning their nuclear-weapons programmes and arsenals out of self-interest. Belarus, Kazakhstan, South Africa and Ukraine all weighed the risk and responsibility of nuclear weapons and made the decision to eliminate their nuclear programmes or give up their nuclear weapons. As the apartheid regime in South Africa ended, the country's leaders eliminated its nuclear weapons and joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine willingly gave up the nuclear weaponry that the Soviet collapse bequeathed to their territories, and over the years several other countries were willing to abandon clandestine nuclear-weapons development efforts when reassured by the United States and others that their relationships with us and the global community enabled them to meet their national security needs without such tools.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a particularly illustrative example of the wisdom of relinquishing nuclear weapons. In partnership with the United States and aided by the Cooperative Threat Reduction Act spearheaded by United States Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar, Kazakhstan opted to remove from his territory former Soviet weapons and related nuclear technologies and joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State. This courageous decision of the leaders of Kazakhstan greatly reduced the prospect of nuclear weapons, components of nuclear weapons, nuclear materials or dual-use technologies from falling into the wrong hands. Nuclear weapons introduce complexity into relations with other countries and introduce the risk of miscalculation, accident or escalation.

Kazakhstan's actions represented a key step in that country becoming part of the community of nations. As a result of letting go of nuclear weapons, the world does not look on Kazakhstan as a potential nuclear aggressor or a rogue State. It did not make enemies of its nuclear neighbours, Russia and China. Today, Kazakhstan has overwhelmingly been at peace with his neighbours, and its trade relations are robust. This year it hosted Expo 2017, an event in Astana that showcased the sources of future energy and investment opportunities in Kazakhstan for attendees from around the world.

Kazakhstan is a modern nation making a substantial contribution to regional and international peace and prosperity. It has only benefited from its early decision. In my previous career, I met President Nazarbayev on many occasions and had the opportunity to ask him about this decision. He is more at peace with his choice than ever. He once remarked to me, "It was the best thing I ever did for our young country".

Ukraine made a similar courageous choice. Even after Russia's encouraging incursion into its territory in Crimea in eastern Ukraine, in violation of Moscow's commitments under the Budapest Memorandum, Ukraine's leaders reaffirmed yet again the wisdom of their decision to remove nuclear weapons. Their friends and allies quickly came to their aid in response to this violation of their sovereignty with a strong unified set of sanctions on Russia and are steadfastly committed to ending this conflict through full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

By rejecting the power of nuclear weapons, both of these two proud nations are in a better place than they would have been otherwise. They reduced the danger of nuclear conflict and help reduce the chances of such capabilities falling into the hands of irresponsible third parties.

As the only nation on Earth to have used nuclear weapons in warfare, the United States bears a heavy responsibility to exercise proper stewardship of nuclear weapons and to lead in working with other nations to reduce global nuclear dangers. It is a blessing and perhaps in many ways a miracle that nuclear weapons have never been used again. All the peoples of the world pray that they will never be. Experience is a hard but wise teacher and has taught everyone the grim moral responsibility that accompanies nuclear weapons.

The United States is reliant upon nuclear deterrence today for the purposes of safeguarding not only our own security interests, but also those of our allies who otherwise might feel the need to acquire such weapons themselves. Such deterrence and such relationships have contributed to the absence of war between the great Powers since 1945 and, indeed, to the fact that nuclear weapons themselves have never been used again.

We are all fortunate that John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, when they stood on the brink of a nuclear holocaust during the Cold War, came to a common understanding of the fearful and awesome power of nuclear weapons. As potential human extinction loomed over the Cuban missile crisis, the dominant emotion was fear. Nuclear weapons brought the most powerful men in the world no comfort, but it

did make clear the need to minimize the risk of ever repeating this near-miss of a catastrophe by permitting nuclear capabilities to spread further.

Just this week, the world learned of the passing of a little-known but important figure in the history of the cold war. His name was Stanislav Petrov and he is sometimes referred to as "the man who saved the world". In 1983, Petrov was a Soviet military officer on duty at a nuclear early-warning centre when his computers detected a barrage of incoming American nuclear missiles. He said, "I had all the data to suggest that it was true". He said, "If I had sent my report up the chain of command, nobody would have said a word against it". He said, "All I had to do was to reach for the phone to raise the direct line to our top commanders but I could not move. I felt like I was sitting on a frying pan".

Petrov had a hunch that the computer had made an error, and fortunately he was right about a false alarm. Instead of notifying his commanders to prepare an immediate nuclear counter-attack, he instead called army headquarters and reported a system malfunction. This episode illustrates just how high the risk factor is with nuclear weapons, especially when decisions to use them are entrusted or could be entrusted to sometimes unreliable technologies or fallible human judgment. Countries that want nuclear weapons must ask themselves, "Are we prepared to deal with this type of scenario in our own country?"

The history of the Cuban missile crisis and the Soviet early-warning malfunction illustrate how challenging it can be even for the most experienced and most sophisticated nuclear-weapon possessors to control nuclear dangers. Rogue regimes fail to appreciate the responsibilities inherent to nuclear weapons. They wish to develop or expand their holdings of nuclear weapons in what they claim to be a search for security, but in fact they desire to use such tools to intimidate and coerce their neighbours and destabilize their regions. Such acquisitions risk creating an escalating spiral of regional or global instability and conflict, not just as a direct result of their own proliferation but by prompting other nations to undertake their own nuclear-weapons programmes in response.

In such circumstances, nuclear weapons are not instruments of mutual deterrence and strategic stability, but instead are tools of destabilization. Rogue regimes may have persuaded themselves that they pursue nuclear weapons to establish and enhance their security and prestige but in fact nuclear weapons are more likely to undermine both. There is a very good reason why almost every country in the world has joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

All parties can know that they will not in the future face the threat of nuclear catastrophe from any new direction. If would-be proliferators seek security or to improve their standing in the world or to enhance the prosperity of their citizens and their peoples' hope for a brighter future, proliferation will not provide these things. There are much better proven ways for nations to establish and enhance their standing, such as deepening their trade integration with the rest of the world, adhering to international standards and agreements and participating in humanitarian activities.

The Korean peninsula serves as a stark example of these differing paths. While North Korea has shunned the international community and let its people starve while it relentlessly pursues nuclear weapons, South Korea has opted not to pursue nuclear weapons and is fully engaged with the international community. As a result, South Korea has grown into one of the world's great economic Powers, with a gross domestic product over 100 times larger that of its neighbour to the north. By contract, though, North Korea may assume that nuclear weapons will ensure the survival of its regime. In truth, nuclear weapons are clearly only leading to greater isolation, ignominy and deprivation. Continued threats against us, the United States, and now the entire global community will not create safety for the regime, but will rather stiffen our collective resolve and our commitment to deterring North Korean aggression.

North Korea is a case study in why nations must work to preserve and strengthen global non-proliferation norms. As we look to the future, the international community's record of enforcing compliance with non-proliferation obligations and commitments is not what we need it to be. It is partly for lack of such accountability that we find ourselves in the situation that we are in with North Korea at the moment. Although it joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the mid-1980s, North Korea never came into full compliance with the Treaty and cheated on every subsequent arrangement designed to remedy that non-compliance and rein in the nuclear threat it now presents.

There are also lessons here for Iran, which was on its own pathway to develop nuclear weapons, in

violation of its Non-Proliferation Treaty, nuclear safeguard obligations and multiple, legally binding Security Council resolutions. Iran seems keen to preserve for itself the option to resume such work in the future, even while sponsoring international terrorism, developing missile systems capabilities for delivering nuclear weapons and destabilizing its neighbours in a dangerous quest for regional hegemony.

The collective responsibilities of meeting such proliferation challenges will require more from all of us. As President Trump said in his speech on Tuesday,

> "If we are to embrace the opportunities of the future and overcome the present dangers together, there can be no substitute for strong, sovereign and independent nations" (*A/72/PV.3, p. 14*).

As strong, sovereign and independent nations, we must work together bilaterally, regionally and globally to stem the tide of proliferation. Sovereign States, acting in unison, will produce a global good.

We especially urge Russia to examine how it can better support global non-proliferation efforts. As the world's two most powerful nuclear States, Russia and the United States share the greatest responsibility for upholding non-proliferation norms and stopping the further spread of nuclear weapons. We have cooperated well before. The United States and the Soviet Union worked together closely in drafting most of the texts that became the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which helped keep proliferation under control through the Cold War. Washington, D.C., and Moscow did this, moreover, notwithstanding their own Cold War rivalry and the many problems in their bilateral relationship.

In the post-Cold War era, Russia worked hard to improve accountability for its nuclear stockpile dispersed across the former Soviet Union, and we engaged closely in cooperative efforts, through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, to reduce the risks of weapons or material falling into the hands of proliferators or terrorists. Unfortunately, in recent years Russia has often acted in ways that weaken global norms and undercut efforts to hold nations accountable. Examples include violating its own obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, flouting the security assurances it made at the end of the Cold War, impeding efforts to build on the legacy of past international efforts on nuclear security, and seeking to weaken the International Atomic Energy Agency's independence in investigating clandestine nuclear programmes. If Russia wants to restore its role as a credible actor in resolving the situation with North Korea, it can prove its good intentions by upholding its commitments to establishing international efforts on nuclear security and arms control.

Cooperation from China is also essential if the international community is to bring North Korean nuclear missile threats under control and prevent a catastrophe spiralling towards instability and conflict on the Korean peninsula. If China truly desires to denuclearize the Korean peninsula to promote stability and to avoid conflict in that sensitive region right on its own border, now is the time to work with the rest of us — the rest of the international community — to put the kind of pressure on North Korea that can change its strategic calculation before it is too late.

Lastly, we must be fully aware that there are non-State actors who will never conform to international norms governing nuclear weapons. Their grand-scale terror attacks, beheadings, crucifixions, burnings, rapes, torture and acts of enslavement expose the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), Al-Qaida and other groups as those who seek to find glory through death and destruction. Their eagerness to commit atrocities makes it clear that if given the chance, they would sow death and destruction on an even larger scale — and there is no scale larger than a nuclear attack on one of the world's cities. Many jihadist groups aspire to detonate a nuclear device in the heart of a booming metropolis. Their mission is to kill our people and send the world into a downward spiral. We must never allow this.

We must continue to work to secure nuclear technologies, blueprints and materials at their own sources and disrupt proliferation networks. We must deepen information-sharing between intelligence agencies in order to identify actors and identify where nuclear materials have been or may be diverted from legitimate uses. We must revive the practice of creating alternative career and job opportunities for nuclear experts so they do not sell their skills on the black market.

But ultimately, the best means to halt jihadists in their quest for nuclear weapons is to destroy them long before they can reach their goal. Whether on the battlefield, in the streets or online, terrorism must be given no quarter. We must remain ever vigilant against the spread of ISIS and other Islamist groups

in new locations, whether in Africa, Asia, Europe or elsewhere. One of the great successes of the campaign of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria has been uprooting ISIS from formally safe havens in which it could freely mastermind attacks against targets the world over. These efforts must continue.

As a body committed to security, we must treat nuclear proliferation with the seriousness it deserves. For those of us on the Security Council, counteracting nuclear threats begins with full enforcement of the Security Council resolutions all Member States are bound to implement. To make sure all nations are able to play their part, we must continue to work for the full and effective implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). But signing treaties and adopting resolutions is not enough. Stopping nuclear proliferation also entails exercising other levers of power, whether diplomatic, economic, digital, moral or, if necessary, military. Ultimately, we each have a sovereign responsibility to ensure that we keep the world safe from nuclear warfare, the aftermath of which would transcend all borders.

The United States will continue to work to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We ask all peace-loving nations to join us in this mission.

The President: I now invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan to take the floor.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): I thank the Ethiopian presidency for providing this platform. I also thank High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Nakamitsu and the previous speaker, Secretary Tillerson, for their very valuable reflections, including on the contribution of my nation to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

The effective implementation of resolutions, treaties and conventions, together with sanctions regimes, are mutually complementary instruments that prohibit the use and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The effectiveness of sanctions resolutions is measured by their ability to achieve the mandated goals. We regret to note that the impact of sanctions resolutions does not always meet our expectations. This is often because of the deliberate non-compliance of other States that undermine our collective efforts to maintain peace and stability.

Kazakhstan's approach to this issue has been conceived by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has repeatedly underscored the need to develop concrete mechanisms to discourage nuclear-weapon-possessing States that are party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) from withdrawing from the Treaty. More specifically, it was proposed by my President that a State's request for withdrawal should be subject to intensive inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for possible violations, as a review of the reasons for withdrawal by NPT member States at an extraordinary conference, and, if all attempts fail, an immediate transfer of the matter to the Security Council under Chapter VII, Article 41, of the Charter of the United Nations.

We recommend that a similar process be applied to States that regularly violate WMD-related resolutions. Certain fundamental questions need to be considered, including the rationale for their actions and how Member States can be motivated to not cooperate with States under sanctions. We must try to foresee which of the imposed sanctions are detrimental to the trade and economic interests of other States and whether it would be worthwhile considering the development of compensatory and incentive-based mechanisms to ensure that Member States fully adhere to their obligations, or restrict or terminate cooperation with States under sanctions.

Today, with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the dilemma arises when the Council is aware that a military solution is not an option, but at the same time it is not easy to launch a negotiating process. Kazakhstan strongly condemns Pyongyang's defiant, provocative actions. We consider the continued sanctions pressure is a step in the right direction until North Korea heeds the appeal of the world's majority.

We therefore suggest that the parties involved should reduce tensions and weigh the prospects of all possible decisions. We believe that the joint proposals of Russia and China are worthy of consideration. The role of Secretary-General Guterres as a mediator cannot be underestimated. Therefore, developing and adopting a universal document within the United Nations on negative guarantees and non-aggression by the five permanent members of the Security Council and other nuclear Powers would be most relevant and a significant incentive for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the NPT as a non-nuclear State.

Implementing the robust steps undertaken by President Nursultan Nazarbayev — namely, in closing the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and renouncing

the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal — strongly required the cooperative efforts of the Russian Federation and the United States. Their cooperation in assisting my nation to rid its nuclear legacy, as well as the rehabilitation of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, was exemplary. I believe that the United States and the Russian Federation could continue with this very fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation in new circumstances with regard to the new threats emerging in our contemporary world.

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the Security Council's resolution, Kazakhstan is ready to offer practical assistance by hosting a regional seminar for Central Asian countries. This would be in conjunction with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006). We also highly appreciate the open briefing to be held on 9 October by the Chair of the 1718 Committee for all Member States.

With regard to Iran, we would like to note that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) on the Iranian nuclear programme was achieved as a result of intense prolonged negotiations, and we were honoured to host two rounds of those talks in our southern capital, Almaty. It is necessary to acknowledge that this agreement has put Iran on a nuclear-free path, with the IAEA confirming that Iran is fulfilling all its nuclear obligations. We should therefore convincingly show Pyongyang the correct road map, with a legal solution that also works pragmatically. It is worth pointing out that it was due to the active efforts of the parties, through their determined peace talks, that the JCPoA was achieved against the backdrop of continuing sanctions.

Another glaring illustration of a weakened non-proliferation regime is the case of the use WMD in Syria. In general, Kazakhstan is firmly convinced that the Security Council must be united at this critical stage in its approach to finding a political solution to the crisis in Syria. For our part, we will continue to provide the Astana platform a complement in order to facilitate the negotiation processes in Geneva. In turn, an early resolution of the military and political crisis in Syria would allow us to remove the vacuum that allows chemical weapons be used with impunity.

The non-proliferation regime is greatly supported by the cooperation mechanisms of resolution 1540 (2004), and every effort must be made to strengthen its implementation. My country participates actively in its work and continues to provide financial assistance. In this context, we acknowledge that the Nuclear Security Summits, initiated by the United States and followed by others, have significantly reduced the nuclear threat and strengthened the global architecture of nuclear safety.

Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed, during the launch of the IAEA low-enriched uranium bank facility in Kazakhstan, reviving the process of Nuclear Security Summits and offered Astana as a host for such a summit in the future. He has also proposed to unite the efforts of all the States from nuclear weapon-free zones, which have proven to be one of the most effective means in the fight against the spread of nuclear weapons.

All of us need to show responsibility, political will and wisdom to take decisions of great historical significance. We need to put the good of humankind above national interests to solve one of the most difficult global problems — keeping the world safe from WMDs. I am confident that we will do so.

The President: I invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt to take the floor.

Mr. Selim (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, at the outset, I should like to express my sincere joy at seeing you preside over the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her valuable briefing. We can conclude from that briefing that a new and comprehensive approach is needed to guarantee the adoption of effective measures in an attempt to put an end to the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

We must also stress the centrality of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts in maintaining international peace and security. In light of the vital importance that Egypt attaches to the disarmament and non-proliferation of WMDs, and to seize this important opportunity to discuss such a crucial issue in such an important setting, I have decided, contrary to normal practice, to deliver my statement today in English to ensure the full clarity of my message.

(*spoke in English*)

Egypt has always been at the forefront of multilateral efforts aimed at the disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which continue to represent one of the most pressing threats to humankind and to international peace and security. We highly value the indispensable role of the Security Council

in addressing proliferation challenges and enforcing the relevant Security Council resolutions and legal framework governing the issue. However, we believe that the Council's working methods in this area require significant improvement. We should examine more efficient and inclusive methods that would improve the sense of ownership of the measures adopted, seek a stronger utilization of the Secretary-General's good offices, and always adopt decisions that reinforce the concept that the ultimate aim of all measures adopted by the Council is to achieve a peaceful political solution.

From a more comprehensive perspective, Egypt reiterates its concern over the grave threat posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons, and we reaffirm that the total, verifiable and irreversible elimination of such weapons represents the ultimate guarantee against their proliferation and the ultimate warranty against their use by States or non-State actors. Attaining this goal largely depends on the implementation by the nuclear weapon States of their obligations under article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and leading the efforts towards the achievement of universal adherence to the Treaty, which continues to represent the cornerstone of international security and the core of today's disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.

In spite of the evident tangible progress achieved in the area of non-proliferation, progress towards nuclear disarmament continues to be held hostage to construed conceptions pertaining to strategic stability. It is time for us, States Members of the United Nations, to have an honest and inclusive discussion on the validity and consistency of those arguments that imply that the possession of nuclear weapons and reliance on nuclear deterrence contribute to international security and stability. In fact, a closer look at contemporary non-proliferation challenges, including country-specific cases, would clearly reveal that, one way or another, those challenges flow from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the discriminatory nature of the non-proliferation regime, which undermines its credibility and effectiveness.

There is no doubt that, in a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, the United Nations and the Security Council would have been much better positioned to address non-proliferation threats and cases of non-compliance in a more credible and non-discriminatory manner. Practice has shown that it is quite illusive to address non-proliferation while disregarding disarmament, or selectively tackle cases of non-compliance while deliberately ignoring achieving the universality of the NPT.

Several recent remarkable developments, such as the adoption of the Humanitarian Pledge, as well as a landmark treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, are clear signs that the circumstances have changed on the international stage — clear messages that the non-nuclear-weapon States that have truly committed themselves to the principles of disarmament and non-proliferation are becoming increasingly impatient with regard to the need to seriously address the gaps in the prevailing regime and the discrimination embedded therein, which was not intended to last forever at the time of the NPT negotiations or at its entry into force.

Despite the extremely volatile nature of its region, Egypt has proven its good intentions by becoming party to the NPT and fully implementing its obligations, in recognition of the vital role of the Treaty in international security. We took those decisions in good faith because we value human life and international security. Furthermore, Egypt has always actively supported and implemented all Security Council resolutions aimed at addressing country-specific proliferation concerns without discrimination, as well as combating the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors.

Egypt continues to fully support the Council's role in seeking a peaceful solution to address the nuclear activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea which violate Security Council resolutions and which we strongly condemn. We also support the Council's supervision of Iran's compliance with its obligations, as well as establishing credible facts regarding the parties responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Nevertheless, the Middle East regrettably continues to be one of the most evident examples of the threats that the non-proliferation regime is facing, as well as the selective manner in which the Security Council has approached such threats. It is important to recall that the Security Council has failed to implement the stipulations of resolution 687 (1991), which contains an explicit recognition of the objective of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

It is therefore unsurprising that the region is experiencing an unprecedented level of frustration, especially among the Arab countries, due to the repeated failures in implementing the agreed undertaking to

establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. This is reflected in the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which represents an integral part of the decision on the indefinite extension of the Treaty. We remain greatly disappointed by the decision of three States parties to the NPT to block consensus on the final document of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, thereby further eroding the credibility of the Treaty.

Finally, I would like to reiterate our principled position that such thematic, cross-cutting issues pertaining to the enforcement of disarmament and non-proliferation commitments should also be addressed in a more inclusive manner and with the active involvement of all Member States in all the relevant organs of the United Nations. Collective security for all is a necessary requirement now more than ever to achieve the kind of sustainable peace and development that we owe to future generations.

The President: I now invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to take the floor.

Mr. Klimkin (Ukraine): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting on this highly important issue at the request of the United States delegation. I also appreciate the substantive briefing by Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu.

For years the international community has been working persistently to establish a rules-based international order "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" — a phrase we all know too well. A whole range of international instruments were elaborated to that end, especially in the area of non-proliferation. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has become a key fundamental element of the system of collective security. Was it a major achievement? Definitely, yes. As of today, 191 States have adhered to the Treaty. Is it an ultimate success? Here I am not so sure. Almost 50 years after its entry into force, the possible use of nuclear weapons remains a threat. Furthermore, some States still aspirte to develope their own nuclear-weapon capabilities. In addition, the Chemical Weapons Convention has been blatantly trampled — in Syria — for the first time in many years. I cannot fail to mention the growing risk of the most dangerous materials falling into the hands of non-State actors, whether intentionally or as a result of neglect or oversight.

The mere fact that today we must again discuss how to enforce Security Council resolutions aimed at preventing the spread of weapons of mass destructions clearly proves that the existing system of established norms and principles has been eroded. This is not just about proliferation, but is an indication of the broader problem of insufficient implementation of international law and of systematic violations thereof. The current state of affairs can suit only those who seek to undermine the very foundations of the international order. A lack of real accountability for defying international norms only encourages further breaches.

North Korea is probably the most appalling case. Despite numerous decisions by this organ, the regime continues its nuclear and missile programme, keeping the entire region and its own people hostage. It seems that North Korea's leaders are prepared to sacrifice their own people, starving them to death, just to satisfy their rampant ambitions. Unfortunately, we know how it feels from our own history when Soviet rulers created famine in Ukraine, selling grain for gold, using slave labour in camps to build up military capacity, and testing nuclear weapons on their own troops just to see how they worked. The nuclear ambitions of North Korea and its recent actions in defiance of Security Council decisions is an open challenge to the entire international community.

In the Middle East, the use of chemical weapons — something that was considered unthinkable less than a decade ago — now represents a very clear danger. The task is therefore to reverse this precarious trend and prevent the world from sliding into a state of lawlessness. We must stand united to achieve a universal adherence to rules that we ourselves created.

How do we ensure the implementation of Council resolutions to prevent the spread of the most dangerous and destructive weapons? Indeed, the unconditional and faithful implementation of the relevant resolutions is a key prerequisite to reduce the level of threat and to prevent any kind of new provocation. Yet the Council is not always united and staunch in taking necessary measures for an effective, rather than formal, response. Breaches of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, as well as the use of other weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical weapons, should be treated by the international community as a clear danger. That is why I urge Council members to put aside differences and use every tool available to ensure full compliance with the relevant decisions.

In the absence of the political will to do so, the situation can spiral out of control. There should be unavoidable accountability for each and every violation. The risks in this area arise not only from gaps in national legislation, but also from the rapid developments in science and technology, as well as e-commerce, along with the lack of awareness among academia, industry and civil society. Strengthening cooperation in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is therefore fundamental and absolutely essential.

No part of the globe is immune to the risk of proliferation. In the 1990s, Ukraine voluntarily dismantled the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal. I remember that time quite well, as my father was flying Soviet nuclear bombers and I started my diplomatic career on nuclear disarmament. We Ukrainians did that being convinced of the supremacy of fundamental international principles, such as the inviolability of international borders, territorial integrity and sovereignty. We believed that those principles were sacred to everyone. Two decades later we still hold those principles dear. Yet we came to realize, unfortunately all too well, that they are not sacred to everyone. I want to stress, in that regard, that violations of international law, including in the sphere of non-proliferation, constitute the single most significant threat to international peace and security.

As members of the Council know, Ukraine is confronting aggression by a nuclear-weapon State, Russia. Brutal violations of international obligations, including under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, by Russia, which acceded to assurances of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, undermine the whole United Nations security system, based on the principles of international law. One could also recall, in that regard, the obligation of the nuclear-weapons States set out in the final document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons:

> "to fully respect their existing commitments with regard to security assurances".

More than three years ago, Russia not only carried an act of military aggression against Ukraine but, by violating the Budapest Memorandum, it also demonstrated that the solemn promise of a nuclear Power to respect the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine, to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine and to ensure that none of their weapons ever be used against Ukraine, except in self-defence or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, is now worth nothing.

The Russian narrative that it did not breach the Budapest Memorandum since nuclear weapons were not used against my country is yet another cynical manipulation. Just think of the impression it made in the eyes of States seeking to bolster their deterrent potential. Just think of the impact to the global non-proliferation infrastructure.

The recent drill on launching a massive nuclear-missile strike, which was conducted during the Zapad 2017 exercise, does not inspire any confidence in Russia. It can hardly be considered as contributing to strengthening international security in general, or the non-proliferation regime in particular. That is why we are convinced that the issue of providing non-nuclear-weapon States with effective negative security guarantees is not a platitude. The global non-proliferation regime will benefit immensely from enforceable security guarantees. Let us all be absolutely frank on this issue: empty proclamations do not convince anyone anymore.

The international community has a collective responsibility to restore respect for international law and find lasting solutions to the most urgent threats to global peace and security. It is therefore ultimately the responsibility of the Security Council to spare no effort to achieve the overarching goal and prove that the non-proliferation system works effectively. Otherwise, the world map will be redrawn by newly emerged nuclear-weapon actors. It is the Council that has to remain determined and precise in preventing such a scenario from becoming tomorrow's reality.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): I thank you, Mr. President, and the United States for arranging this timely and important meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for the introduction to the subject.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is definitely a growing threat to international peace and security. Having looked around the table — before I begin my formal statement — I would like to say that I cannot help but reflect on the composition of the

Security Council. We have Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which have scrapped nuclear weapons; we have Bolivia and Uruguay, from a continent free from such weapons; we have the five countries that possess such weapons; and Japan, the only country that has experienced their destructive force and power. It therefore seems to me that this ought to be the perfect group of countries to move forward on this particular issue.

For close to half a century, Sweden has been a champion of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As so clearly articulated by the Secretary-General in his opening address to the General Assembly on Tuesday (see A/72/PV.3), those goals are intrinsically linked. We have a moral and humanitarian responsibility to make progress on both. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons initiative is an expression of the widespread and well-founded frustration that exists with the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament. That will remain so until we see real progress with nuclear-weapon States delivering on their commitments.

Sweden is committed to the success of the current review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the call in successive Security Council resolutions to all States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay and without conditions. In addition to providing analytical and forensic expertise, Sweden has contributed financially in support of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) verification of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the regime established by resolution 1540 (2004). Through the European Union, we have contributed significantly to outreach programmes designed to help countries strengthen their export control systems.

Regrettably, since we joined the Council in January, we have been called upon, time and again, to address the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's illegal testing of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and we have condemned those provocations in the strongest terms. Likewise, we have been dealing with numerous cases where horrific chemical weapons have been used by the Syrian regime and by Da'esh. The Council's efforts to stop the spread of these deadly weapons need the full support of all Member States to succeed. For that reason, Sweden has called for the universal and comprehensive implementation of existing sanctions regimes. This applies not least to the non-proliferation-related sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We must all work together to implement those sanctions fully, so as not to contribute to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's illegal nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles programmes. Improved monitoring and targeted capacity-building are important measures. I join the Secretary-General in his call for unity in the Council and diplomatic engagement to resolve the crisis.

Atrocities such as those perpetrated in the Idlib province in April are unacceptable, and those responsible must be brought to justice. Sweden applauds the way in which the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Joint Investigative Mechanism have fulfilled their mandate by investigating cases of alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria and identifying those responsible, with a high level of expertise and professionalism. We must continue to give our full and unambiguous support to these important mechanisms. The Council must stand united to ensure the accountability of perpetrators.

It would be remiss of me not to mention, in that context, resolution 2231 (2016) and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action JCPOA. As stated by Federica Mogherini last April,

> "the JCPOA was a historic achievement for the security of the region and of the whole world, a success for multilateral diplomacy that has proven to work and deliver".

It is absolutely vital that all parties continue to implement their JCPOA commitments meticulously and unfailingly. Strict and effective verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Joint Commission for addressing implementation matters are vital components of the agreement.

Implementing the resolutions is just one side of the coin. We must also nurture and defend the existing multilateral instruments that we have established to curtail the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Unity is key. That applies to the Joint Investigative Mechanism, but also other important non-proliferation tools, such as the resolution 1540 (2004) regime and the IAEA-strengthened safeguards system, to mention just two.

The spread of weapons of mass destruction is one of the gravest challenges to international

peace and security, and a crucial responsibility of the Council. Sweden will continue to do its part to promote disarmament and non-proliferation, respect for international law and accountability for those who violate their international legal obligations.

The President: I now invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan to take the floor.

Mr. Kono (Japan): Please allow me to begin by emphasizing how timely it is for the Security Council members to have this opportunity during the high-level week of the General Assembly to discuss non-proliferation, an issue that the international community must tackle in unison.

Japan is deeply concerned by the serious challenges facing the international non-proliferation regime. It is critical for the Council, which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, to resolutely and concretely address the serious issues that are shaking the very foundation of the non-proliferation regime.

Given the seriousness of the situation, it is urgent that we achieve the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty without further delay, in addition to strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons regime. Japan calls upon the international community to work closely on practical and concrete measures to that end.

North Korea has ignored the strong protests and warnings of the international community by going ahead with a ballistic missile launch that flew over Japan last week. Earlier this month, it also conducted its sixth nuclear test, which is suspected of being a hydrogen-bomb test and which was on a far greater scale than previous tests. This is an entirely unacceptable provocation. North Korea's provocative actions, including its nuclear test and the series of ballistic missile launches, pose grave challenges to the international non-proliferation regime. It goes without saying that North Korea's actions clearly violate relevant Security Council resolutions. They also pose an unprecedented, grave and imminent threat to the peace and security of the region, including Japan.

No bright future awaits North Korea if it continues on its present path and its isolation from the world continues. Japan strongly urges North Korea to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, including the recently adopted resolution 2375 (2017), and to immediately demonstrate seriousness and concrete actions towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Japan also calls for North Korea to return to compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement as soon as possible.

The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula requires the international community to apply the strongest possible pressure on North Korea. Current efforts are insufficient, and further pressure is needed. To that end, Japan strongly calls for all States Members of the United Nations to fully and promptly implement the relevant Security Council resolutions. No State should be allowed to use a loophole in the North Korea sanctions regime.

The non-proliferation of chemical weapons is another important issue that needs to be addressed by the international community. Japan, which experienced a sarin chemical attack in its subway, cannot accept the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances. In that regard, Japan condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons in the town of Khan Shaykhun in Syria. The Organzation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism are currently conducting their investigation to identify the perpetrators of chemical attacks. Japan supports the activities of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. I would like to stress that the Security Council must be united and hold the perpetrators accountable in order to prevent a recurrence of the use of chemical weapons.

Finally, I would like to address the issues surrounding Iran. Japan supports the Iran nuclear deal, which will contribute to the international non-proliferation regime and the stability of the Middle East. It is extremely important that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) be continuously and steadily implemented. In that regard, Japan supports the monitoring and verification activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency and again underlines the importance of the steady implementation of the JCPOA and its spirit. The ballistic missile launches by Iran are inconsistent with resolution 2231 (2015). Japan strongly calls for Iran to play a constructive role in the region.

I would like to conclude by calling for the international community to make concerted efforts

against actions that threaten the international non-proliferation regime.

The President: I now invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy to take the floor.

Mr. Alfano (Italy): I want to thank the United States for calling for today's meeting.

Almost 50 years ago, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons entered into force. Thanks to collective efforts, the Non-Proliferation Treaty has become a pillar of our collective security. Over the course of the Treaty's existence, Italy has been a champion of the Treaty. Non-proliferation is a fundamental good that the international community and the Security Council have to preserve. Collective security cannot be guaranteed without non-proliferation. It is important to have robust and effective implementation of international law. There should be accountability.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has caused one of the biggest crises of our times. We have to stand firm and united in order to defend non-proliferation, which is a common good for all of us and a guarantee of peace, security, and stability. Italy condemned Pyongyang's launching of a ballistic missile over Japan on 15 September, as well as all of North Korea's missile and nuclear tests. With resolution 2375 (2017), the Council sent a clear and strong message: further attempts by the regime to defy the United Nations will backfire. If North Korea wants to step back from self-isolation, it must stop developing its missile and nuclear programme.

A different story is that of Iran, which has moved in a positive direction regarding its own nuclear programme. The Iran nuclear deal has delivered gains for global security by imposing strict limits on Tehran's nuclear programme. In return, we have lifted sanctions. It serves as a good example of effective diplomacy and smart sanctions. However, reaching the deal was just the beginning. Now we must continue to ensure that Iran does not stray off the path of nuclear non-proliferation.

As the facilitator of resolution 2231 (2015), Italy will continue to foster the smooth implementation of that crucial resolution. We are concerned by Iran's missile tests, which seem inconsistent with the spirit, if not the letter, of resolution 2231 (2015). That can exacerbate regional instability and put the progress made so far at risk.

Unfortunately, we have seen no progress in Syria. To the contrary, we have witnessed the repeated use of chemical weapons against innocent people. That constitutes a horrific war crime. Their use by the regime and by Daesh must be stopped. Those found guilty of such war crimes have to be sanctioned accordingly. Therefore, we need to redouble our efforts to identify anyone who has played a role in the use of chemical weapons against the defenceless civilian population.

I have a few more words on the use of sanctions. As Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006), on North Korea, Italy has focused on the concrete effectiveness of sanctions. It is important to monitor their implementation in order to get a precise picture of compliance by the sanctioned party and address weaknesses in the enforcement of sanctions. We have also placed emphasis on strengthening technical assistance and capacity-building, providing Member States with the necessary tools to implement the sanctions.

Moreover, we have worked to increase political awareness of the sanctions framework. In order to achieve that goal, the Committee has intensified its outreach activities and has facilitated regular exchanges of information among Member States, the Committee and the Panel of Experts. So far, six outreach meetings have taken place for each United Nations regional group. We have already scheduled an open briefing for the entire United Nations membership on 9 October. Thanks to that outreach, an increasing number of States are now reporting to the Committee on the implementation of the sanctions. We are seeing the results of our joint work.

At the same time, Italy is engaged with our partners from the European Union to adopt resolution 2375 (2017), on North Korea, into our legal system as soon as possible and identify more autonomous, restrictive measures.

To conclude, we want to ensure that the sanctions have an impact on the proliferation programmes of the regime. However, we also want to avoid negatively affecting the humanitarian situation because, as an international community, we care about the fate of the people of North Korea.

The President: I now invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China to take the floor.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and their means of delivery constitutes a real threat to international peace and threat, as well as a shared challenge for the international community. Therefore, I deem it extremely necessary and timely for the Security Council to devote today's meeting to that subject so as to discuss how to address the proliferation challenges, mobilize international consensus, enhance capacity-building and strengthen coordination and cooperation.

Thanks to the unremitting efforts of the international community, the non-proliferation regime has become increasingly refined and sophisticated. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear issue serves as a useful lesson for the diplomatic settlement of key non-proliferation issues. With the continued and steady implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), international efforts have been strengthened in order to deal with challenges posed by non-State actors.

Meanwhile, we have to recognize that the current international security situation is undergoing profound changes. Non-proliferation still faces challenges and risks. A few individual countries defying the consensus of the international community have conducted several nuclear tests. The risk of non-State actors, especially terrorists, acquiring and using WMDs is on the rise. The international non-proliferation regime must urgently increase its authority, universality and effectiveness.

Non-proliferation is a matter of international peace and security and makes up an important part of communally building a shared future for humankind. It requires coordinated, good-faith international cooperation on many fronts.

First, it is necessary to address both symptoms and root causes. Non-proliferation is basically a matter of security. Security concerns may be the biggest motivation behind proliferation. Countries must pursue common cooperative, comprehensive and sustainable security and pursue a new type of international relations that feature win-win cooperation. Countries must renounce the notion of their own absolute security and opt for universal security for all. That is the effective way to fundamentally resolve proliferation issues.

Secondly, we need to adhere to the orientation of diplomatic settlement. It is necessary to impose sanctions and pressure as appropriate on countries that blatantly violate international non-proliferation rules, but Sanctions are not a panacea — dialogue and negotiation present a fundamental solution. Confrontation and sanctions alone only lead to the escalation and spilloverof conflicts. We need to discard the willful use of long-arm jurisdiction, as it is in the interests of nobody.

Thirdly, we must uphold the international non-proliferation regime. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is customary international law in the field of non-proliferation. The international non-proliferation regime, with the NPT as its bedrock, is an essential element of the international security order established after the Second World War. It has prevented more countries from accessing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) while protecting global strategic balance and stability. The practice of using international law when it is suitable, but putting it aside when it is not, should be discarded. Double standards or a selective approach should also be discarded; otherwise, the dyke of the international non-proliferation regime could collapse a result of one small leak.

Fourthly, we need to strengthen the non-proliferation capacity of various countries. The primary responsibility rests with Governments. We must respect and support countries in formulating their non-proliferation policies, according to national circumstances, and help countries bolster their laws and regulations on non-proliferation, strengthen law enforcement capacities and carry out exchanges, mutual learning and cooperation in the field of non-proliferation, so as to jointly enhance non-proliferation performance and capacity.

China firmly opposes the proliferation of WMDs and their means of delivery. We have set up a complete non-proliferation and export control system and have ensured its effective implementation. At the same time, China is also actively participating in international non-proliferation processes, while comprehensively and completely implementing relevant Security Council resolutions, and has been dedicated to the political settlement of hotspot non-proliferation issues.

China has played a contrustive part in negotiations on the JCPOA and contributed its own proposals. China has made tireless efforts for a negotiated settlement to the Korean nuclear issue. We have raised a suspension-for-

suspension initiative and a dual-track approach, which are feasible and practical solutions to the issue. China believes that Security Council resolutions on the Korean nuclear issue should be implemented in their entirety entirety and in an effective way, while intensifying sanctions. It is also important to promote the resumption of talks and dialogue. Sanctions pressure needs to be translated into the motivation for negotiations. China also supports the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and United Nations agencies in reaching comprehensive objectives and carrying out comprehensive, objective and fair investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

International non-proliferation efforts require the participation of various countries, and vice versa. China is ready to work with all parties to make a greater contribution to maintaining and strengthening the international non-proliferation regime, promoting cooperation on global governance in the field of non-proliferation and building a community of shared future for humankind.

Mr. Lemoyne (France) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of France, I thank the Ethiopian presidency, the United States and its Secretary of State, Mr. Rex Tillerson, for convening this very timely and necessary meeting. I also thank Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu for her very informative speech.

The General Assembly's high-level week will be marked by intense discussions on the acute threats to our world. Our strategic environment and the foundations of peace and security, as we know them, are facing major challenges, particularly in the area of non-proliferation. There is no doubt that the outlook is bleak. With the barbaric use of toxic agents in Syria, Iraq and Asia, we are witnessing the disastrous reappearance of weapons that sow the seeds of fear and death among people — ones that we thought we had banished to the annals of history.

I also refer to the growing risks on the Korean peninsula, which will have monopolized many of our discussions this week. The threat has now risen to an increasingly alarming and unprecedented level and is of concern to us all. Far from reverting to reason, the Pyongyang regime is continuing its military escalation and continues to provide evidence of its irresponsible attitude through its increasingly disturbing and threatening actions.

Beyond those worrying cases, we are facing increasingly complex proliferation flows and increased risks of diversion of sensitive goods and technologies, which are more and more easily accessible. Finally, proliferation is no longer the exclusive domain of a single type of actor — the risk of non-State actors getting their hands on sensitive materials is now a dangerous reality. In the face of those extremely serious challenges, only pragmatic and realistic multilateralism can be the solution.

The Iranian case confirms that a proactive attitude from the international community can open up solutions to proliferation crises. The Vienna agreement, which France has actively helped to build and improve, is a major historic milestone. President Macron has said that France is firmly committed to it. It would be a mistake to denounce the agreement, as it would be irresponsible to pursue an à la carte implementation of the provisions of the resolution that endorsed it. We must respond to the intensification of Iran's ballistic activities, some of which are not in conformity with resolution 2231 (2015). Such behaviour is destabilizing for regional security and undermines mutual trust.

To put it another way, there can be no alternative to the non-proliferation regime. That is a constant line from which France has never deviated. That is particularly true of the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, where those responsible for the tragedy on 4 April and so many other attacks will have to be held accountable.

That also applies to the ongoing crisis on the Korean peninsula, which we must respond to with firmness and unity. The only way out of the crisis is to chart the way for a negotiated solution. While North Korea refuses that option and chooses dangerous isolation, only firmness can give us the leverage we seek to bring the regime to the negotiating table.

Collective action to contain proliferation requires dialogue and a direct discussion of crises. However, it also involves concrete and operation action. To contain and curb proliferation, we must, more than ever, increase our mobilization. However, let us not neglect the virtue of the regimes already in place — the current non-proliferation regime is being severely tested but it has also proved its worth.

The Security Council has long been committed to strengthening the current non-proliferation regime. It can count on the support of the international organizations that are capable of verifying the compliance of States

with their commitments and establishing facts and responsibilities. I would like to commend the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In addition, multilateralism, as part of non-proliferation, strengthens cooperation and the exchange of information. Mechanisms, such as export control regimes and the Proliferation Security Initiative, are part of a virtuous movement that enhances our level of vigilance. We must work to strengthen those mechanisms.

To conclude, I wish to recall one simple truth. What is at stake is the weakening of the non-proliferation regime. If that were to happen, the very existence and authority of the rule of law would be threatened. We would need to further sanction violations. Beyond our passing political differences, as deep as they might seem, there are fundamental rules from which we cannot waver. Non-proliferation is at the forefront of those, because it is a important concern to us all. France's message is simple — the fight against proliferation is a collective responsibility. Everyone must contribute to shouldering that responsibility as much as they can. There is no room for impotence, fatalism or political exploitation. We can and must do more. Our responsibility today, our credibility in the future and our ability to protect generations to come from the risk of an eroded or even collapsed non-proliferation architecture are at stake. I assure the Council that France is fully committed to that endeavour.

Mr. Field (United Kingdom): I thank Secretary Tillerson for calling this important meeting of the Security Council.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one of the gravest regional and international security concerns. This threat does not respect national borders, and the proliferation of such weapons must end. We all have a part to play in this.Our shared rules and norms are designed to keep the world safe. The Council has a responsibility to prevent proliferation, tackle threats and respond when these weapons are used. Individual nations also have a responsibility to implement the measures imposed by the Council and indeed to be ready to go further when the situation requires.

Individually and collectively we must enforce these rules, working through bodies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), or as groups of concerned States. If we are to succeed, the Council and strong multilateral institutions must be at the heart of that approach and we must persist when countries continue to defy the international rules-based system. That is why it is right that we have collectively developed a framework of sanctions against North Korea and continued to strengthen those sanctions in the face of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's dangerous provocations. I was in Seoul only last month and was struck by the focus of President Moon Jae-in's Government in trying to resolve the situation, recognizing that what has long been a regionalized dispute now has truly global ramifications.

Secretary Tillerson has made it clear that the United States does not regard it as desirable to work for regime change or accelerated reunification of the peninsula, to garrison its forces north of the thirty-eighth parallel or indeed to harm the North Korean people. Yet the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has responded with more missile tests and another nuclear test. While the regime prioritizes its military programmes, the people of North Korea suffer deprivation and hardship. That is why we must all continue to press North Korea to respect the Council's resolutions and, even at this late stage, to change its reckless course. We must enforce the measures that we have adopted and be prepared to expand them if North Korea continues on that reckless path.

Turning to the very different case of Iran, we now know that the multilateral system can and will continue to deliver results. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has succeeded in limiting Iran's nuclear capability. Iran has rolled back its nuclear programme, and the International Atomic Energy Agency has had unprecedented access. The British Government will therefore continue to abide by its commitments under that deal and urge the other parties to do the same. Iran must also continue to do so if we are all to have confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. However, while the JCPOA has dealt with one risk, others, as we all know, remain. Iran continues to play a destabilizing role within its region and its ballistic-missile testing is still inconsistent with resolution 2231 (2015). Iran must respect the call of the Council and cease such activities.

As other members have said, the situation in Syria also poses the most serious proliferation challenges. This year, sarin gas has again been used as weapon, in a clear violation of the international prohibition

of the use of chemical weapons. There must be no impunity for the perpetrators of such terrible crimes against humanity. The United Kingdom Government urges Council members to support the vital work of the Council-mandated OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and to renew its mandate, and we must keep up the efforts to prevent non-State actors from acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction, based on resolution 1540 (2004).

We all recognize that these proliferation challenges are very complex. They require a persistent and united approach in line with existing treaties and norms. That is why the Government of the United Kingdom, for one, does not believe that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was opened for signature yesterday, is helpful. I believe that it will only create unnecessary divisions and undermine the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which rightly sits at the heart of all of our non-proliferation efforts.

The Security Council has a heavy responsibility to protect international peace and security. Member States share that responsibility and must play their part in implementing the Council's resolutions. We now need to work tirelessly together to stop proliferation, save lives and make the world a safer place.

Mr. Loedel (Uruguay) (*spoke internationaln Spanish*): I would like to thank the delegation of the United States for convening this meeting and for the concept note that has been circulated. I am also grateful to Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her statement.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a serious and real threat to international peace and security. When we discuss the proliferation of such weapons in the Security Council, we must remember that all States have a duty to respect their obligations under international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

In 1968, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was hailed as the most significant international agreement on disarmament ever achieved. Under the Treaty, non-nuclear-weapon States committed to refraining from acquiring, developing or producing such arms and to verification by the international community, and recognized the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Nuclear-weapon States committed to getting rid of them. The NPT, which became the cornerstone of the disarmament and nuclear-non-proliferation regime, requires a balanced implementation of its three pillars — disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It is the only Treaty currently in force with regard to such weapons. Thirty years after the NPT's entry into force, two of the three countries that were not signatories to it detonated nuclear bombs and joined the category of nuclear-weapon States. Much more recently, a third State, which withdrew from the Treaty, has also entered that category, and we cannot ignore that.

With the fiftieth anniversary of the NPT one year away, it is clear that the goal of achieving general and complete disarmament is a long way off. Disarmament today is either at a standstill or, worse, sliding backwards. To quote article VI of the NPT,

> "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

The commitment undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States is far from having been fully upheld. A clear example of this is the absence of those States from the negotiation process on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which opened for signature yesterday. Our country is proud to be a signatory thereto.

The use and threat of use of nuclear weapons represent a crime against humanity and a grave violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, and of the Charter of the United Nations. The only guarantee against the use and threat of use of these weapons is their express prohibition and their total elimination.

At a time when tension on the Korean peninsula continues to escalate and when the threat of the use of nuclear weapons and of a military conflict is keeping everyone on high alert, it is necessary to remain calm and ensure that we protect global peace and security. Nuclear weapons must never again be used by any actor, under any circumstances. There is no military solution to the North Korean problem. The solution must be a political one.

The Security Council must remain united on this issue and uphold its commitment to a peaceful and

diplomatic solution to the situation on the Korean peninsula. Any other option would be an immense failure for the Council and the Organization.

Uruguay sees no other solution to the North Korean issue than one that is found through dialogue, negotiation and political commitment between parties.

Regarding chemical weapons, Uruguay condemns the use of toxic chemicals as weapons against civilians in any armed conflict. Such actions constitute war crimes, and those responsible must be held accountable and brought to justice. In this connection, Uruguay supports the work undertaken by the Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and we commend the work of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to clarify who was responsible for the incidents in Syria. The JIM has identified the terrorist group the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham-Da'esh and the Government of Syria as responsible for some of the chemical attacks in Syria.

Uruguay also wishes to underscore the importance of halting the proliferation of conventional weapons to areas of conflict. The trafficking and trading of arms among the parties to armed conflict directly contributes to the suffering and death of civilians. As was the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay stated in May in the Council, quoting the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the five permanent members of the Security Council supplied 75 per cent of the volume of the total arms exports for the 2011-2015 period (see S/PV.7951).

As a country resolutely committed to bolstering the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, Uruguay from this rostrum issues a strong appeal to all States to urgently comply with all disarmament and non-proliferation obligations, in line with the international legal framework. In particular, we appeal to those States that produce, possess and sell arms. Disarmament and non-proliferation must be a priority for all without exception.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by conveying to you the sincere apologies of his Excellency Mr. Sidiki Kaba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, who, because of a last-minute scheduling conflict, was not able to participate, as he had planned to do.

Our delegation would like to thank the United States of America for having requested this meeting and the Ethiopian presidency for having facilitated its convening. We also thank Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, whose very important statement has shed light on our work.

Our debate today is a topical one, given recent events, which constantly remind us of the pressing nature of the terrorist threat and the growing risk of seeing non-State actors acquire nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Indeed, the rapid progress of science and technology, as well as globalization, facilitated by ongoing developments in the world of business, all are new factors that non-State actors could use to help them acquire weapons of mass destruction. This is demonstrated on the one hand by the use of chemical weapons in the Middle East and in Asia and, on the other, by issues related to cybersecurity, whose consequences could be even more serious if they were to be attacks aimed at critical infrastructure such as nuclear power plants.

Meanwhile, on the Korean peninsula, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is methodically pursuing its military nuclear programme in deliberate violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, with the objective of developing nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, which seriously undermines the non-proliferation regime and exacerbates tension in the region and beyond.

All of this clearly reflects the need to rigorously implement the commitments contained in the various relevant resolutions. Indeed, in the absence of genuine political will to put a term to it, the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will continue to grow.

In the light of all these factors, my country condemned as firmly as is possible the launch, for the second time in less than a month, of a North Korean ballistic missile, which flew over the Japanese island of Hokkaido before crashing into the Pacific. The launch took place less than a week after the adoption by the Council of resolution 2375 (2017), which condemned North Korea's sixth nuclear test, on 3 September.

The targeted measures rightly adopted in the previous resolution of the Council against North Korea must, in order to meet the challenge posed by the North Korean ballistic and nuclear programme, be part of a comprehensive political strategy that would prompt the parties to engage, with the assistance of the international community, in a frank dialogue whose ultimate

objective would be respect by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its international obligations and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

That is why my country, in reiterating our commitment to a peaceful and diplomatic settlement of the Korean crisis, calls once again for a resumption of a direct dialogue between the parties so as to create conditions conducive to peaceful coexistence between the countries and the peoples of the region.

Right now, the challenge to be met by all of us — States, international organizations and the business world — remains that of implementing the current sanctions measures, because failure to do so provides the North Korean authorities with sizable loopholes that they are systematically using to mobilize the resources necessary to pursue their illegal and dangerous programme.

We must work to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by making it universal and by promoting respect for previously reached commitments. Senegal remains convinced that working for the universalization of the NPT and the implementation of its relevant provisions, as well as acting in a resolute manner to secure the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, constitute decisive steps on the path towards general and complete disarmament.

Furthermore, it is now more necessary than ever to draw up a detailed inventory of all sources of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world so as to ensure that they are systematically placed under safeguards or destroyed. Significant measures have already been taken to this end, but a great deal remains to be done.

In an interdependent world, where our interests are linked together, strengthening cooperation in the areas of border controls, the monitoring of financial flows and Internet activity and legal assistance is more necessary than ever if we are to develop an aggressive preventive strategy designed to ensure that weapons of mass destruction do not fall into the wrong hands. Of necessity, that involves not just sharing experience but working to synergize the efforts of all the stakeholders concerned.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are interrelated and dialectically linked goals. It is therefore meaningless to speak of general and complete disarmament when, in addition to the nuclear-weapon States that already exist, there are others that are circumventing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons so as to acquire such weapons. Our work on nuclear non-proliferation must therefore must go hand in hand with the effective implementation of disarmament, according to a verifiable and irreversible timetable. To that end, our initiatives should focus on the multilateral framework that the United Nations system offers.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I will begin by stating frankly that we were surprised by the inclusion of the issue of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the context of country-specific topics. There are other, more inclusive, formats for that. In our view, the most appropriate format for Security Council meetings on non-proliferation is one involving a discussion of general principles for solving the problem rather than picking fights with States that have had the misfortune to be designated so-called rogue countries by individual members of the Council. That is the approach in the concept note from the United States delegation, which artificially links three country situations that have nothing in common. To understand the essence of what is happening, a brief history lesson is in order.

Russia and the United States were at the forefront of developing the concept of international cooperation aimed at preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of non-State actors, as embodied in resolution 1540 (2004). Our countries affirmed the importance of setting up a judicial and law-enforcement bulwark designed to prevent such evils through intergovernmental cooperation. Thereafter, however, the landscape began to change significantly, and the concept was sacrificed to the geopolitical manoeuvres of some of our partners, leading to acute destabilization in a number of regions around the world. We are all well aware of what the result of exploiting non-proliferation mechanisms to put pressure unpopular regimes was. The fate of Saddam Hussein, who, as we know, had no weapons of mass destruction but was accused of possessing them, and of Muammar Al-Qadhafi, who voluntarily gave up his own programme, became a pretext for certain States to accelerate their programmes for developing weapons of mass destruction. While that in no way justifies the nuclear-missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it is short-

sighted to ignore or fail to understand the reasons behind it.

Taking advantage of the externally generated chaos — and sometimes military interventions, such as in Syria, Iraq and Libya — extremists of all stripes have been granted a broad range of opportunities for acquiring and making use of weapons of mass destruction. What is that if not a gross violation of resolution 1540 (2004)?

An unprecedented new challenge has emerged. Attempts to get the Security Council to at least pay attention to various glaring facts, let alone take action, continue to be deliberately blocked without any serious justification. Consider, for example, that resolution 2118 (2013) includes a provision obliging Governments that are neighbours of Syria to inform the Security Council immediately of any attempts by non-State actors to acquire weapons of mass destruction or their means of delivery. Judging from the lack of any such reports to the Council, one might suppose that the problem simply does not exist. However, our attempts to raise that issue in the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) were firmly suppressed by our Western partners. We have repeatedly heard about the use of poisonous substances by combatants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other groups. There are reports of their access to both the technologies and infrastructure needed to manufacture such weapons. Such problems should be thoroughly investigated by the Security Council, but thanks to the efforts of some of our partners, they continue to be passed over in silence.

Let us speak frankly. Syria no longer has any Government chemical-weapon programmes, and the task of ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Syria is now limited to preventing them from falling into the hands of non-State actors. As far as we know, no one has presented convincing evidence to the contrary to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Moreover, the Russian-Syrian proposals for conducting a comprehensive investigation of the United States version of the tragic events of April in Khan Shaykhun were met with active opposition. The result is that so-called reliable reports of the alleged use of chemical weapons at Syria's Al-Shayrat airbase, which was used to justify an act of aggression against a State Member of the United Nations, has still not been confirmed by OPCW inspectors or experts from the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, despite the fact that the facility has been open to them since April. We firmly believe that it is the efforts by a number of our partners to force the facts of these matters to fit the Procrustean bed of their political purposes that constitute the main reasons for the appearance in the Middle East and North Africa of the chimera of chemical terrorism, which has begun to abate only since the Syrian people have made a major breakthrough in the fight against terrorism.

We believe that the key to an effective WMD non-proliferation regime lies in renouncing interference in the internal affairs of States and the policy of overthrowing unpopular regimes, as well as in establishing a unified and indivisible security system for all countries, without exception. If the those issues are not dealt with, the Security Council's non-proliferation sanctions will merely freeze the current issues without helping to resolve them for good, especially at a time when the Council's primary role in the maintenance of international peace and security is being undermined by the introduction of illegitimate, unilateral measures.

We have seen the effectiveness of respect for those principles in the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which has become a symbol of the triumph of multilateral diplomacy and an affirmation of our ability to settle highly complex problems through negotiation as long as the requisite political will exists. The information-sharing, verification and control mechanisms developed within the framework of the JCPOA are enabling us to make progress on a path to a broader conclusion by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as to the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. Based on regular inspections, the Agency has confirmed that Iran is fully complying with its obligations. We were surprised today to learn from the United States Secretary of State that Russia is apparently undermining the IAEA. That is, of course, news to us. Unfortunately, we have recently seen irresponsible, unilateral attempts to torpedo that breakthrough collective agreement. We hope that common sense will prevail in the end, and that the Plan will be allowed to become fully operational, thereby allowing it to reach its full potential. In that regard, implementation of their voluntary commitments in good faith by all States Parties to the JCPOA is key.

At the beginning of my statement, I said that these country situations are not linked to one another, but I would like to correct myself. Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea became

linked today, because a withdrawal from the JCPOA by the United States would be the worst possible signal we could send to North Korea. Similar and even more intensive diplomatic efforts are now needed on the Korean peninsula. We need to start now so as not to waste any more time or wait for the logic of confrontation to prevail. We are convinced that the reasons for the tensions on the peninsula are not just Pyongyang's nuclear-missile programme and the pretext it creates for heightened military activity in the region but are also the result of the lack of mechanisms providing a single and indivisible security system for every country in North-East Asia. It is clear that without such mechanisms, a political and diplomatic settlement of the problems on the Korean peninsula is impossible. We do see a solution in the implementation of the Russian-Chinese initiative, which at present is the only plan of action on the table. It would be a step in the right direction if the Security Council endorsed the well-known "four nos" concept, spelled out by Secretary of State Tillerson, who is present here today.

In conclusion, I would once again like to stress that the future prospects for non-proliferation cannot be considered in isolation from the overall strategic context. Realpolitik presupposes that all factors with a bearing on strategic stability and international security must be considered. Among others, they include the continuing establishment by the United States of global missile defence systems and NATO's joint nuclear missions, which it carries out in violation of articles I and II of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Strengthening the WMD non-proliferation regime is important to Russia, and we will do our utmost in support of that goal, with a focus on active cooperation with our regional and international partners.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General and Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing. We would also like to welcome Her Excellency Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, to the Security Council.

The immeasurable destructive power of nuclear weapons means that it is now imperative that the legal ban on nuclear war be strictly adhered to in practice if we are to ensure the survival of civilization and humankind itself. Because of their permanent radioactivity, nuclear weapons, whose terrible and indiscriminate effects are inevitably felt by military personnel and civilians alike, represent a threat to humankind's very survival and could ultimately render the entire Earth uninhabitable, as is stated in the preamble of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, otherwise known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

I am from that region, the first in the world to declare itself a zone of peace. Bolivia, a constitutionally pacifist State, promotes a culture of dialogue and the right to peace, as well as cooperation among the peoples of the world, with full respect for sovereignty, through diplomacy among peoples. Our Constitution prohibits the manufacture or use of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons on Bolivian soil. We once again urge all States, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to stop including nuclear weapons in their doctrines, security policies, military strategies, political discourse and arsenals.

During its presidency of the Security Council in June, Bolivia convened an open debate entitled "The global effort to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors" (see S/PV.7985), with the goal of determining how to strengthen the preventive system so as to avoid the humanitarian, political, economic and environmental catastrophes that could result from the use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons by non-State actors, particularly terrorist groups. We firmly believe that resolution 1540 (2004) is a platform for providing assistance and fostering cooperation among States to prevent non-State actors from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction, whether chemical, biological or nuclear. However, we completely disagree with that fact that it is very often used as a mechanism to put pressure or impose sanctions on States.

Once again, Bolivia firmly condemns the ballistic-missile launches and nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and we call on it to abandon its nuclear and ballistic-missile programme in a comprehensive, verifiable and irreversible manner, in line with the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We reject any act of provocation, unilateral measure or any measure not sanctioned by international law or that flouts the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which could pose a threat to international peace and security, especially on the Korean peninsula. That is why we encourage all

the parties concerned to avoid escalating tensions and rhetoric. We call for an end to the downward spiral of confrontation, the threat of the use of force or war, of nuclear retaliation or of the complete destruction of one or other of the parties.

It must be understood that there can be no military solution to the situation on the Korean peninsula. We echo the words of the Secretary-General, who said, based on resolution 2375 (2017),

> "[t]he solution must be political... We must not sleepwalk our way into war. More broadly, all countries must show greater commitment to the universal goal of a world without nuclear weapons." (*A/72/PV.3, p. 1*)

So far this year, the Security Council has adopted three resolutions with increasingly stringent sanctions, which may have various distinct consequences. As the resolutions stipulate, we believe that not only must we work to implement the sanctions, we must also work to bring the parties to the negotiating table and resume the Six-Party Talks. In that regard, Bolivia reiterates its support for the Chinese "suspension-for-suspension" initiative, which would allow for a simultaneous cessation of hostilities on the Korean peninsula, as well as the Chinese-Russian proposal and road map, which, to date, is the only concrete proposal that has been put forward to resolve the situation.

It is important to highlight the major achievements that have been made in the area of non-proliferation through dialogue and peaceful means. The most poignant example is the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme, which was negotiated by the five permanent members of the Security Council, the European Union and the International Atomic Energy Agency. It highlighted the willingness of the parties to achieve the goal of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. All reports, including from international organizations, indicate that Iran is honouring its commitment. That is why we want to draw attention to the fact that one of the parties is threatening to renege on that commitment and cause more instability in the region. It is critical to ensure that we learn from the past and do not use the putative presence or absence of weapons of mass destruction as a pretext for effecting regime change or destroying States.

I would like to conclude by reading two of the preambular paragraphs of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was opened for signature yesterday.

> "Mindful of the unacceptable suffering of and harm caused to the victims of the use of nuclear weapons (hibakusha), as well as of those affected by the testing of nuclear weapons ...
>
> "Recalling that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, States must refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations, and that the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security are to be promoted with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources".

Article I of the Treaty states that each State party to it undertakes never under any circumstances to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia.

Only two days ago, Secretary-General António Guterres, in his remarks at the opening of the General Assembly, told us that "global anxieties about nuclear weapons are at the highest level since the end of the Cold War" (*A/72/PV.3, p. 1*). It is impossible to disagree with that assessment. Indeed, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is posing serious threat to global peace and security. Nowhere has this danger become more pressing than in the current situation surrounding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In this context, I should like to underline the following three points.

First, it is important to comprehensively address risks of proliferation through political and diplomatic means aimed at finding a negotiated solution. The modality through which the States participating in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) managed to address the Iranian nuclear issue is indeed a significant achievement for multilateralism. The JCPOA and the follow-up mechanism of the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015), as well as the progress registered so far in the implementation of the JCPOA, have taught us a very important lesson. By that, I mean that what was achieved amounted to being an example for how pressing issues of peace

and security can be addressed through diplomatic means. Of course, we recognize that much more needs to be done by the participating States in clearing up misunderstandings and avoiding any possible obstacles to the full implementation of the JCPOA.

Secondly, based on the lessons learned from the JCPOA and the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015), the Security Council and the international community might have to explore mechanisms to address the serious and imminent threat posed by the nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The continued provocative activities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should not be a cause for weakening the unity within the Council, which is so critical to effectively pursuing our broader objective of addressing the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

This brings me to my third point on the broader threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This has to do with the now very possible scenario of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors and the real and present danger this poses to international peace and security and to humanind. Multilateral agreements, such as the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, continue to contribute immensely to the prevention and elimination of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. They need to be adhered to in a scrupulous manner. But still, much more needs to be done to ensure universal accession to and the full implementation of such agreements. Regional nuclear-free zones, such as the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, also remain central to the global and regional non-proliferation regime and the creation of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Security Council plays a critical role in addressing the serious threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by using all the available tools at its disposal, including through sanctions. However, all of us should be able to fully implement Council measures if they are to meet their intended objectives. I would therefore like to conclude my remarks by affirming Ethiopia's commitment to working towards that objective.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the Her Excellency Ms. Kang Kyun-wha, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

Ms. Kang (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to speak to the Council. I also thank Secretary Tillerson for calling for the meeting and Under-Secretary-General Namamitsu for her briefing.

It is a great honour for me to return to the Council, although under very different circumstances and with very different responsibilities. I shall be brief, as it is late in the day.

Let me start by reaffirming my Government's strong commitment to strengthening the global non-proliferation regime. As outgoing Chair of both the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime, we have led the strengthening of the multilateral export control regime. We have also been a strong advocate of countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) to non-State actors by supporting efforts to build an enduring nuclear security architecture and implementing relevant Security Council resolutions. Not least, we continue to work with the international community to make meaningful progress in the run-up to the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Although I could elaborate futher on my Government's efforts in field of the non-proliferation of WMDs, I am compelled on this occasion to focus on the single topic that poses the most urgent and grave threat to the international non-proliferation regime — that is, North Korea's nuclear and missiles threat.

Last year, North Korea conducted two nuclear tests and launched 24 ballistic missiles. This year, during a period of less than nine months, North Korea conducted another nuclear test and launched 19 ballistic missiles. On average, since 2016 North Korea has launched two ballistic missiles every month. The most recent, sixth nuclear test, on 3 September, was especially alarming, with its explosive yield far exceeding the sum of all five previous tests and North Korea claiming it as a hydrogen bomb to be mounted on an intercontinental ballistic missile. The Security Council quickly responded with the strongest ever resolution — resolution 2375 (2017) — but the ink was barely dry on that new resolution when North Korea launched yet another

ballistic missile launch, which flew a distance of 3,700 kilometres over Japan into the Pacific.

The international community has reacted firmly and rapidly to the latest provocations by North Korea. In addition to the quick adoption of the new Security Council resolution, numerous countries and international organizations have strongly condemned North Korea and taken unilateral measures. The Republic of Korea appreciates and welcomes the firm actions taken by the international community. North Korea must be stopped. North Korea must be made to understand that continued provocations will only deepen its diplomatic isolation and intensify the economic pressure that will lead the regime to ruin. Denuclearization is the only path to a secure and stable future for the North.

Since the first nuclear test by North Korea in 2006, nine Security Council resolutions have been adopted. With repeated provocations and resolutions, it is perhaps easy to lose the sense of urgency around the issue. Perhaps it has become routine. But we must not let that happen. Indeed, the urgency of the issue is heightened by the day and by the week. We may be rapidly approaching a point of no return. The North Korean leader is quoted as saying that North Korea is indeed in the final stages of nuclear weaponization and that it will clearly demonstrate to the world that this goal will be achieved despite endless sanctions. Further troubling is the potential for the proliferation of North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles, which would deal a crippling blow to the international non-proliferation regimes.

Thus, with a renewed sense of urgency, we must ensure now more than ever the full implementation of the Security Council's resolutions, which include sanctions on North Korean coal, iron, fisheries, textiles and overseas labourers, as well as a steep cut in refined petroleum products going into the North. Fully implemented, these sanctions will have a significant impact and force a change of course on the North Korean regime.

Let me reiterate, however, that the sanctions are not an end in themselves or to bring North Korea down, but to bring it to the negotiating table for denuclearization. In that regard, we deeply appreciate the active efforts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) and its Chair.

Even now, North Korea is continuing its reckless drive towards nuclear weaponization, testing the resolve of the international community. We can only go as fast and as effectively as the slowest link among us. North Korea will try to take advantage of the weakest link among us to defeat the Council's resolve and decisions. Therefore, the Council members and the international community must stand together in implementing the sanctions and in sending the unequivocal message to North Korea that it will pay painfully and dearly for its provocations, and its nuclear weapons programme will never be accepted.

Let me emphasize that our common goal is to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of North Korean nuclear programme in a peaceful manner. The Republic of Korea will work assiduously and tirelessly to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea and the establishment of permanent peace on the Korean peninsula. We will work closely with all to that end.

I would like to conclude with a message to North Korea, which I am sure is shared by the Council as a whole: "Come to the right side of history."

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8054

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8054th meeting
Monday, 25 September 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Alemu	(Ethiopia)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, who is joining this meeting via video-teleconference from Jerusalem.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: Today I devote my regular briefing to the Security Council to reporting, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) during the period from 20 June to 20 September. In this third briefing, I will once again focus on developments on the ground in accordance with the provisions of the resolution, including on regional and international efforts to advance the peace process.

During the reporting period, Israel did not cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, or fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard, as called for by the resolution. Since 20 June, Israel's illegal settlement activities have continued at a high rate — a consistent pattern over the course of this year. Activity during this period was concentrated primarily in occupied East Jerusalem, where plans were advanced for over 2,300 housing units in July, 30 per cent more than for the whole of 2016. That includes plans for some 1,600 units expanding a ring of settlements north of East Jerusalem, as well as in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, adjacent to the Old City. While no plans were advanced in Area C during the reporting period, in early September construction resumed on the new settlement of Amihai, in the heart of the West Bank.

The reporting period witnessed the eviction of a Palestinian family in Sheikh Jarrah, residents for over 50 years, after a protracted legal battle. The building is located in a section of the neighbourhood in which several settlement plans were among those promoted in July. Eviction proceedings are under way for some 180 Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, over 60 of whom reside in Sheikh Jarrah.

Meanwhile, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the destruction of Palestinian-owned property across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued, albeit at a significantly lower rate. Overall since the beginning of 2017, 344 structures have been demolished, a third of them in East Jerusalem, displacing some 500 people. In Area C of the occupied West Bank in August, three educational facilities, serving 175 children, were demolished or confiscated, citing the lack of building permits, which are virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

On 25 July, in the city of Hebron, 15 Israeli settler families illegally occupied the Abu Rajab/Machpelah House, despite ongoing legal proceedings over its ownership. On 27 August, the Israeli Government notified the High Court of Justice that it would evict the settlers within one week. However, that process has been put on hold by a temporary injunction issued by the Court.

In other related developments, on 26 July an amendment to the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel passed a first reading in the Knesset. If approved, the law would further cement Israeli control over East Jerusalem. On 17 August, the High Court of Justice issued a temporary injunction formally postponing the application of the so-called regularization law. On 31 August, a military order was issued establishing a civil services administration that upgrades the status of settlements in the H2 area of Hebron, further consolidating Israeli presence there and reinforcing the existing separation and division in this highly volatile area, where some 500 Israelis live among some 40,000 Palestinians. The United Nations considers all settlement activities to be illegal under international law and an impediment to peace. Resolution 2334 (2016) states that the international community will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed to by the parties themselves through negotiations.

I will now turn to the issue of violence, which persists as one of the main obstacles to resolving the

conflict. Resolution 2334 (2016) calls on all sides to prevent such acts and to strengthen efforts to combat terrorism, including through existing security coordination. Although the reporting period was characterized by relatively low levels of fatalities, a number of incidents occurred, particularly related to the unrest following the fatal 14 July attack against two Israeli policemen in Jerusalem's Old City.

During the reporting period, 19 Palestinians, five of whom were in Area A of the West Bank, were killed in attacks, clashes and Israeli military operations. Eight Israelis were killed in clashes and attacks, including the three Israeli-Arab perpetrators of the 14 July attack, who were killed by the security forces. Of the 19 Palestinian fatalities, five were killed during protests and subsequent clashes related to the unrest in Jerusalem. On 21 July, a Palestinian brutally murdered three members of an Israeli family in a terrorist attack in the West Bank settlement of Halamish.

In a reaction to the events at the Holy Esplanade, on 21 July Palestinian President Abbas declared a freeze of all contacts with Israel at all levels, including security coordination. After three months of quiet, on 26 June, 23 and 24 July and 8 August Palestinian militants fired rockets towards Israel, with no injuries reported. In response, the Israel Defense Forces conducted five airstrikes in Gaza, resulting in three Palestinians being injured. On 17 August, one Palestinian was killed by a suicide bomber, who was also killed, close to the Egyptian border in Gaza. This appears to have been the first suicide bombing affecting Hamas forces in Gaza.

During the reporting period, settler-related violence also continued. Some 26 incidents were documented, the majority involving the vandalization of Palestinian agricultural property around Nablus, and assaults against Palestinians in and around Hebron. Meanwhile, at least 26 Palestinian attacks also took place against Israeli settlers, resulting in casualties or property damage. Punitive demolitions also continued during the reporting period, with Israeli authorities demolishing five homes belonging to families of Palestinian perpetrators of attacks.

The reporting period also witnessed a shrinking space for civil society and freedom of expression. On 24 June, the Palestinian President issued, by decree, the Cybercrime Law. Since then, at least six journalists, one human rights activist in Hebron and a number of others have reportedly been arrested. While most were subsequently released, these arrests raise strong concerns that the law is being used to curtail freedom of expression. In Gaza, a social media activist was arrested by Hamas on 3 July and detained for almost two weeks on charges of incitement against the de facto authorities, while a journalist was detained for more than two months on unclear allegations of collaboration with the authorities in Ramallah.

Resolution 2334 (2016) called upon both parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, and to condemn all acts of terrorism. At the height of the July crisis around the holy sites of Jerusalem, officials and representatives on all sides employed provocative rhetoric. In the midst of what were largely peaceful protests, Hamas and senior Palestinian Authority officials called for an escalation and a day of rage across the occupied Palestinian territory. Hamas and others continued to openly glorify terror attacks, describing the murder of three Israelis at their home in Halamish as "heroic". Meanwhile, President Abbas explicitly condemned the 14 July attack and, in an attempt to calm tensions at the holy sites, some Palestinian leaders and religious authorities on both sides called on protestors to avoid violence and provocation.

With regard to settlements, Israeli officials continued to use provocative rhetoric in support of expansion. On 3 August, the Israeli Prime Minister delivered an inauguration speech at the launch of the construction of 1,000 new housing units in the Beitar Illit settlement, in which he praised the achievements of his Government in promoting settlement construction. On 28 August, he said that

> "there will be no more uprooting of settlements in the land of Israel ... . We will deepen our roots, build, strengthen and settle".

Other senior Israeli politicians also made repeated calls for annexation of the West Bank, with one Member of the Knesset expressing his desire to "destroy" hopes for Palestinian statehood, and stating that "there is room to define and realize the national aspirations of one people only — the Jewish people".

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated the call of the Middle East Quartet on both parties to take steps to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperiling the two-State solution. On 10 July, an interim power-purchasing agreement was signed between the Palestinian and the Israeli electricity

companies, energizing the first Palestinian-owned and operated sub-station in Jenin and allowing for an increase in electricity supply in the northern West Bank. On 13 July, the United States facilitated an agreement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, allowing for an increase in water supply for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as part of the 2013 Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance project.

In Gaza, the situation remains extremely fragile. The chronic energy deficit has been substantially worsened by the decision of the Palestinian Authority to reduce electricity supply to the Strip. While Egyptian fuel has enabled the Gaza power plant to resume operations, electricity supply is still down to about four hours per day. Basic services in some 190 health, water and sanitation facilities continue to rely on back-up generators powered by United Nations-provided fuel. As part of the Gaza emergency appeal issued in July, an additional $4 million from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund has been released to support critical services. The appeal is now 51 per cent funded.

To end the standoff, the Palestinian Authority has remained firm in its demands for Hamas to dissolve the administrative committee it established in March and allow the Government of National Consensus to take up its responsibilities in Gaza. On 17 September, Hamas officially accepted these conditions. It now remains to be seen whether the agreement will be implemented and electricity supply to Gaza restored.

I have just returned from a trip to the Gaza Strip, and I am happy to brief the Security Council in closed session on developments related to Palestinian reconciliation and the Government returning to Gaza.

During the reporting period, there were no developments related to Member States' distinguishing, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories it occupied in 1967. Meanwhile, the international community has continued its efforts to advance the goal of peace. The envoys of the Middle East Quartet continue to meet to discuss current efforts to advance peace, as well as the deteriorating situation in Gaza. In August, a United States delegation travelled to the region and met with regional interlocutors, with a focus on reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. All parties agreed to continue working towards a sustainable peace and to promote security and stability across the region.

Shortly thereafter, on 27 August the Secretary-General arrived in the region for his first official visit to Israel and Palestine. He strongly reaffirmed the United Nations position that there is no alternative to the two-State solution and suggested a three-track approach to end the occupation and advance the prospects for peace: first, a serious political process with a clear end goal of two States living side by side in peace and mutual recognition; secondly, a simultaneous effort to improve the socioeconomic conditions of Palestinians; and thirdly, active engagement with regional partners. He conveyed his personal commitment to helping the parties return to meaningful negotiations, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements.

In September, Egypt hosted delegations from Hamas and Fatah in an effort to advance Palestinian unity, which led to the breakthrough decision by the de facto Gaza leadership to dissolve the administrative committee and invite the Government to return to the Strip.

On 18 September, Norway convened the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians in New York with Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Ziad Abu Amr; Palestinian Authority Minister of Finance and Planning, Mr. Shukri Bishara; and Israeli Minister of Regional Cooperation, Mr. Tzachi Hanegbi, in attendance. Those at the meeting agreed that additional concerted action was needed to make progress on fiscal sustainability, economic development and Gaza's reconstruction and recovery. It was also noted that socioeconomic conditions cannot be adequately addressed without progress in the peace process.

In conclusion, I would like to share some broad observations on the reporting period.

Continuing settlement expansion, most notably during this period in occupied East Jerusalem, is making the two-State solution increasingly unattainable and undermining Palestinian belief in international peace efforts. In addition to illegal settlements, the practice of demolishing Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and displacing Palestinians undermines the prospects of peace. Continued violence against civilians and incitement perpetuate mutual fear and suspicion, while impeding any effort to bridge the gaps between the two sides. I once again urge both parties to demonstrate their

commitment to rejecting violence, inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions.

The Jenin agreement was an important first step towards a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian power-purchasing agreement that would lead to greater Palestinian energy autonomy. I encourage the parties to fully implement the Red Sea-Dead Sea agreement to enable the delivery of much-needed water to the West Bank and Gaza.

While all initiatives to improve the Palestinian economy are welcome, much more needs to be done as part of a political process aimed at establishing a Palestinian State. Economic development, as critical as it is, is no substitute for sovereignty and statehood. As the Secretary-General has called for, efforts aimed at achieving both sovereignty and statehood must proceed in parallel.

Intra-Palestinian reconciliation remains critical to preventing the continuing militant buildup and restoring hope for the future. In that regard, I welcome the recent statement by Hamas announcing the dissolution of the administrative committee in Gaza and agreement to allow the Government of National Consensus to assume its responsibilities in Gaza.

I commend the Egyptian authorities for their tireless efforts in creating such positive momentum. All parties must seize the opportunity to restore unity and open a new page for the Palestinian people. That should facilitate the removal of Israeli closures on Gaza, in line with resolution 1860 (2009). The United Nations stands ready to assist all efforts in that respect. It is critical that the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, most notably the crippling electricity crisis, be addressed as a priority.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that collective and determined action on the part of the parties, the region and the international community is needed in order to initiate a serious political process, drawing upon all relevant United Nations resolutions, that will realize a two-State solution and end the occupation and resolve all final status issues. As the Secretary-General said on his recent visit,

> "the international community cannot simply turn away and allow the situation to deteriorate. We have a role and a responsibility to support the parties in resolving this conflict".

With that responsibility comes an obligation to do what is necessary in order to establish a peaceful, prosperous and secure future for Palestinians, Israelis and the entire region.

The President: I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his informative briefing, and to reiterate once again the total support of Uruguay for his work.

Uruguay appreciates the submission of the third report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). We reiterate our interest in ensuring that such reports, like all other reports submitted to the Security Council on the topics that form part of our work's agenda, be circulated in writing before meetings in a manner that enables members to analyse and comment more in detail on their content.

We are concerned at the lack of progress in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has humanitarian, political and security implications in both countries and the region as a whole. In the nine months since the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), little progress has been made in its implementation, with announcements by Israel of expanding construction of settlements in the occupied territories. We reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute a serious obstacle to peace and the two-State solution.

August will also be remembered, unfortunately, by 100 children and their families as a time when three schools in the West Bank were demolished or damaged by the Israeli authorities on the orders of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories. The Jubbet al-Dhib school, which lies east of Bethlehem and which was paid for by the European Union and completed three weeks earlier, was demolished on the same day that school began. A kindergarten in the Bedouin community of Jabal Al-Baba was also demolished and a primary school room in Abu al-Nawar lost its only source of electricity, solar panels. Such actions clearly do not contribute to de-escalation. Additional measures are necessary.

Until a few days ago, the parties had taken no steps to reverse the trends threatening the two-State

solution, according to the latest report of the Middle East Quartet. In that context, we appreciate the announcement made last week by Hamas, offering the Palestinian Authority the resumption of control of the Gaza Strip after a decade. The tragic and worrisome situation of the 2 million inhabitants of Gaza, who are permanently on the verge of a serious humanitarian crisis, constitutes a serious threat to peace and carries the risk of provoking another armed conflict.

The reunification of Palestine under a single, legitimate and democratic Government is essential in order to address the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Such reunification could substantially improve living conditions in that area. If that agreement is to be successfully implemented, it will be essential that measures be accompanied by agreements on security, the disarmament of Hamas and the renunciation of both violence and the destruction of Israel as a declared objective.

On every occasion that the Security Council has met to consider the Palestinian question, we have insisted on the need to abandon the rhetoric of hatred and incitement. Peace will come through negotiations we reiterate that getting on the path of negotiation will come through gestures. In addition to moving away from hatred, we must humanize relations between the two contenders. Additionally, dead enemies on both sides must be returned. For example, the families of Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul have been waiting since 2014 to be able to give them a dignified burial.

As Secretary-General Guterres expressed during his recent visit to the region, Uruguay understands that there are no alternatives to the two-State solution. Uruguay maintains its strong support for the establishment of two independent States and the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace within secure and recognized borders and within a renewed field of cooperation that is free from any threats or acts that breach peace, including acts of terrorism. Agreements must be reached with respect to Jerusalem and other issues, such as equitable access to drinking water and respect for sacred sites.

It is time to reinvigorate a political outlook that will bring the parties back to the negotiating table, which is a process that must be supported by economic and social measures that will improve the living conditions and development of the Palestinian people. To that end, it will be necessary for the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to make every effort to avoid unnecessary provocations that would increase tensions and violence, which hamper all the efforts of the international community to bring about the resumption of bilateral negotiations.

In conclusion, as we have been doing since 1947, we wish to reiterate Uruguay's unwavering commitment to peace in the Middle East. In order to achieve this long-sought-after goal, the parties need to resume direct bilateral negotiations with a view to achieving a two-State solution, which is the only option that will allow for the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine, an end to the long and illegal occupation, and the well-being and security of their peoples.

We are just two months from the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which established the partition of Palestine and the creation of two States, one Arab and one Jewish. This solution was decisively supported by Uruguay, out of the conviction that it would make it possible for Israel and Palestine to live together in peace and with secure borders. Yet despite constant efforts, this process unfortunately remains unfinished. The international community continues to hope that the leaders of Israel and Palestine will take every measure to move this process forward towards a genuine and lasting peace.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Ethiopian presidency for convening today's briefing.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia, as a pacifist country, believes that the only way to guarantee a just and lasting peace in the conflict between Israel and Palestine is through sincere dialogue and clear expressions of political will on both sides with a view to achieving the two-State solution. Based on that conviction, we reaffirm our full commitment to multilateralism and a debate on a level playing field in the framework of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

The present context requires that we, from the seats that we occupy, put an immediate halt to the expansionist policy of Israel, which insists on continuing to move its inhabitants into Palestinian territory, in clear violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and resolution 2334 (2016). It continues to reject the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 2004 on the

construction of walls in occupied territories. It refuses to recognize that Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory have been established in breach of international law, as concluded by the International Court of Justice.

On 22 November 1967, resolution 242 (1967) was adopted precisely as a result of Israel's cruel occupation of Palestinian territories. The resolution refers to the fact that one of the fundamental principles for achieving peace in the Middle East is the withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from the territories they had occupied during that conflict. To date, this resolution has still not been implemented.

The humanitarian situation continues to unravel due to the electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip. In order to maintain a minimal level of emergency service, generators that are at constant risk of fuel shortages or excessive use are relied upon, and spare parts and replacement generators cannot be obtained because of restrictions. We hope that this dire situation will come to an end immediately and that the Palestinian civilian population that inhabits these territories will have access to more humane living conditions. We again urge the Security Council to enforce the demand that Israel, the Power occupying the Gaza Strip, immediately and completely halt its illegal blockade of the territory, which is a collective punishment of the civilian population of Palestine, through, inter alia, the immediate, ongoing and unconditional opening of border crossings in order for humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to move in and out of the Gaza Strip.

As we have said on previous occasions, we request that the Secretary-General's quarterly report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) be presented in written format, which will allow us to analyse the resolution's implementation in detail, and that it include updated maps of all settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. Bolivia wishes to express its commitment to the rapid implementation of the resolution without further delay, and we encourage all members of the Security Council to join forces to make this happen right away. We believe that all the resolutions of the Council should be implemented with the same rigour and commitment that they require, with the sole objective of guaranteeing international peace and security.

In conclusion, Bolivia reaffirms its support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people and its right to a free, sovereign and independent State within the pre-1967 international borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We wish to express our appreciation to Special Coordinator Mladenov for his comprehensive and objective update.

On the political track, we have already expressed our position on the expansion-of-settlements issue several times before, and our generic position remains unchanged, balanced and consistent, so I will not take the Security Council's time to voice it again. I would just add that the principle of two States for two peoples is generally accepted by both Israel and Palestine, along with the entire international community, and should be taken into account as one of the foundations for establishing a lasting peace in the Middle East. We call on the parties to refrain from taking any steps that could impede the resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. By saying the foregoing, we stand for the taking of concrete steps that will preserve the possibility of peaceful coexistence between the two States and strengthen the prospects for peace based on the inalienable right of Palestinians to Statehood and Israel's right to security. We propose to start from encouraging confidence-building measures between the parties consistent with the United Nations pillar related to development.

On the other hand, Kazakhstan welcomes the United States diplomatic efforts aimed at resuming the peace process and United States President Trump's talks with the leaders of both countries at the time of the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We call on the Middle East Quartet to revive its work on the Palestine-Israel track in the context of the American side's efforts in that direction. We also welcome the Russian Federation's and Egypt's efforts to ensure intra-Palestinian consolidation and urge all Palestinian political parties and movements to integrate into one national political structure.

On the humanitarian track, we continue to observe the difficult situation in the Gaza Strip, which we believe contributes to the instability and frustration that can fuel conflict and terrorist activities. In this regard, we urge the official authorities of both Israel

and Palestine to help resolve the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

Finally, in the interest of peace in this long-suffering region, we shall collect and synthesize the best we can find. We should undertake a collective search for the best way to meet the contemporary challenges facing this part of the globe.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8055

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8055th meeting
Monday, 25 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Alemu	(Ethiopia)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Zambrana
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2017/783)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2017/783)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Netherlands, Pakistan and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Guillaume Dabouis, Head of the Political Section of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/783, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Mr. Yamamoto.

Mr. Yamamoto: As we reach the third anniversary of the National Unity Government, I see progress, challenges that are still daunting, and new opportunities for political engagement for peace.

First, I would like to focus on some areas where progress on key reforms has occurred. This has been achieved despite ongoing security challenges. If those reforms can be consolidated and sustained, they will significantly strengthen the foundation for a more self-reliant Afghan State. The good working relationship between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah has greatly enabled the reform process.

The efforts of the Government to address corruption have begun to bear results after many years during which the debilitating issue was ignored. The major effort has been led by the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre, which is increasingly tackling complex cases involving high-level officials. The Centre has completed 21 cases and 14 appeals, enabling it to put a dent in the long-standing problem of impunity for Government corruption.

On 5 October, exactly one year after the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, senior officials will convene in Kabul to review progress made on the Brussels commitments. In that meeting of senior officials, the Afghan Government will need to demonstrate to the donors, including their taxpayers, and to Afghan citizens that the reform and development programmes are translating into real improvements in the well-being of all Afghans. I was encouraged, during the intensive preparations for the meeting, by the active engagement of all Afghan and international partners. International partners also need to demonstrate their clear commitment, and I very much count on the highest level of participation from Council members' respective capitals.

There has also been progress on the organization of parliamentary and district council elections scheduled for next July. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) has completed its assessment of polling stations, reportedly reaching more than 90 per cent of districts. The next step will be voter registration. These two processes will lay the foundation for what will be the most important electoral reforms since 2001 — the establishment of polling station-specific voter lists and the completion of a viable voter registry.

It is imperative that we hold the elections according to the plan. Timely elections will enhance the credibility of the political system and institutions. Many stakeholders, however, remain skeptical that credible elections will be held on time. The IEC needs to further increase its public outreach to demonstrate greater transparency and greater urgency in its electoral preparations. Many Afghan politicians and citizens across the country have told me repeatedly that the country could not endure another election like that of 2014. The electoral commissioners and their staff have inherited a huge responsibility, but the elections are not

the responsibility of the IEC alone. The independence of the electoral management bodies must be respected, and the Government must do everything possible to secure the elections. The international community must provide financial and technical support, but the IEC is in the lead and time is passing quickly.

The announcement of the electoral date has prompted the creation of new political coalitions, some of which are highly critical of the Government. Due to the fact that democracies require responsible oppositions, that may be seen as a constructive development. Many of these groups are crossing ethnic lines in a way that we have not seen before and building national coalitions. A risk, however, is that some might orient their activities towards actions that destabilize the constitutional order, promote ethnic and geographical divisions, or seek to undermine the State. The need to avoid that risk has been a constant element in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's (UNAMA) outreach to all political actors.

The security situation continues to be a major concern. The Secretary-General's report (S/2017/783) describes the main security trends in some detail. With the persistence of the Islamic State, also known as Da'esh, in the east of the country, and some reports of new Da'esh activity in the north, as well as in Kabul itself, the situation has become more complex. The human cost of that violence is high, disproportionately impacting women and children.

Current Afghan security planning foresees that Afghan forces will reach sufficient strength to reverse recent Taliban gains by 2020. The Taliban, meanwhile, continues to resist appeals to negotiate with the Afghan Government. At the current rate of death due to conflict, tens of thousands more Afghans will have been killed by 2020.

In the midst of this human tragedy, all sides acknowledge that there is no military solution to the conflict. The costs, including the human cost of the ongoing conflict, raise the urgency of the peace process. Frankly, the efforts of the past few years have led to little progress. We are, however, seeing renewed interest and efforts towards political engagements for peace. The announcement in August by the United States Administration of a continuing, conditions-based commitment to Afghanistan has removed some uncertainties. Some countries of the region and key countries are actively seeking to foster and promote regional engagements for peace.

We are all aware that preparations leading to a peace process are complex and require patience and time. Such efforts must be pragmatic and flexible, yet principled so as to ensure an inclusive political process to define the country's future. That can occur only when all relevant parties to the conflict communicate with each other to identify the contours of a mutual settlement. On that basis, confidence can be built and a process can be structured. The process must allow for the strategic interests of the countries of the region to be taken into consideration and built on a regional consensus.

I am convinced that a political settlement is possible. We should not let another fighting season begin without progress towards substantive negotiations. Opportunities will be lost, with the price paid in thousands of Afghan lives and at tremendous financial cost. I appeal to the countries of the region to conduct a profound reassessment of their strategic interest and to renew work towards a viable peace process, leading to an Afghan-owned solution to the conflict. If requested, the United Nations stands ready to assist all parties in achieving that goal.

Another potential cost of the conflict is backsliding on recent human rights gains. Violence against women and girls remains widespread. The criminalization of acts of violence against women, included in the legislative decree, remains to be approved by Parliament. The ongoing involvement of children in armed conflict remains a major problem. On a positive note, I welcome the Government's formal endorsement of the national policy on civilian casualty prevention and mitigation. I now call on the Government to implement the national policy through a structured action plan. I am encouraged by Afghanistan's candidacy for the Human Rights Council, and hope that it will be used to consolidate human rights progress in Afghanistan.

Allow me to turn to the Secretary-General's strategic review of UNAMA, carried out at the request of the Security Council. That undertaking provided us with a renewed opportunity to think more profoundly about our role, especially the centrality of the search for peace. We look forward to the Security Council's review of the Secretary-General's recommendations. Furthermore, the entire United Nations family in Afghanistan, as requested by President Ghani, is developing an innovative strategy to deliver its

development assistance as one and in full alignment with the Government's priorities. President Ghani welcomed our proposal, and we are now working ever more closely with his Office and key parts of the Government to put things into place swiftly.

The recommendations of the strategic review will entail significant cuts to the Mission. We will implement our mandate with greater focus and with a streamlined structure. In the past two months, I have visited 8 of our 12 field offices and met Government officials, civil society and United Nations staff. These visits made it clear that the presence of the United Nations is seen as a great benefit to Afghanistan and its people. I am confident that UNAMA will remain well positioned to deliver on its strategic tasks and serve the needs of the Afghan people.

In closing, I emphasize how important it is for Afghan leaders to deliver and demonstrate concrete achievements. Progress must be made in less than four years to make the best use of the Warsaw and Brussels commitments. Afghanistan must demonstrate to its donors that it has taken not just steps, but strides towards self-sufficiency. It is my hope that Afghanistan will soon not be perceived as a source of global security threats, but as a destination for trade and investment.

The President: I thank Mr. Yamamoto for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

Mr. Rabbani (Afghanistan): Let me begin by thanking Ethiopia for convening today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan.

I am also delighted that Ambassador Tadamichi Yamamoto is here with us today. I thank Ambassador Yamamoto for his briefing, but more specifically for his dedicated efforts as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

I am pleased to address the Security Council for the first time as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. This is a fitting opportunity to convey my appreciation for the Security Council's support and attention to the situation in my country, since the start of its journey towards a new Afghanistan in 2001. The people of Afghanistan look to the Council with high expectations as the guardian of international peace and security. Amid all of the challenges, Afghans are hopeful that the international community, the United Nations and the Council, in particular, will respond appropriately to help them achieve what has long eluded them — their right to live normal and dignified lives, in peace and security.

The time has come for the international community to take a fresh look at its engagement in Afghanistan. As President Ghani stated in his address to the General Assembly last week,

> "For too long, the conflict in Afghanistan has been viewed through the prism of civil war; but the war is not within our soil, it is over our soil" (*A/72/PV.6*).

The scourge of terrorism and violent extremism that affects Afghanistan is the product of a long-standing policy by a neighbouring State to keep Afghanistan unstable. It has menaced Afghanistan for several decades now, with its roots located in terrorist sanctuaries and safe havens outside of my country.

A bigger picture of the security situation reveals that our security forces are engaged in a comprehensive fight against the elements of more than 20 internationally recognized terrorist organizations. Thanks to the dedicated support of our international partners, our security forces are leading that fight more efficiently and with great valour and courage.

The Taliban is suffering major setbacks in manpower and morale and failing to hold ground over any territory. That is why its modus operandi draws mainly on suicide bombings and other unconventional criminal attacks on our people, infrastructure, public figures, mosques and international humanitarian personnel. Such barbarity constitutes crimes against humanity — the most recent being the massacre committed jointly by the Taliban and Da'esh in Mirza Olang village in Sari Pul province and the attacks on mosques in Kabul and Herat provinces.

I also wish to highlight that the exaggerated claims of Taliban control over some percentage of territory is being used as psychological warfare. Our security forces have the upper hand against terrorist and extremist groups throughout the country. That trend will continue in a positive trajectory with sustained assistance from international partners to further strengthen the capabilities of our national security forces and improve service delivery for our people.

We in Afghanistan have long called for an international focus that would address the fundamental sources of insecurity in our country. We are pleased that, as of late, there is a growing recognition of that imperative in the international community. The new dynamic presents an unprecedented opportunity, which must be seized. In that regard, I can say with confidence that the new strategy of the United States for South Asia has generated new hope among our people across the country. Afghans from all walks of life are looking to the future with renewed optimism that finally the threats of terrorism and extremism in Afghanistan and the wider region will be tackled appropriately.

In that connection, we welcome the fact that the new strategy recognizes the critical need to address the lingering problem of terrorist safe havens and sanctuaries in our region, and for more determined efforts to end the political, logistical and financial support enjoyed by terrorist groups. Furthermore, the strategy's conditions-based approach has addressed some uncertainties by reinforcing the right message that the international community's engagement will endure until Afghanistan becomes stable and secure.

We urge all partners in our region and beyond to recognize what is at stake. We now have a chance to fundamentally change the status quo for our common benefit. The support of the region, in that regard, will be of paramount importance. Collectively, we should seize this opportunity to strengthen consensus and partnership, in a spirit of cooperation to buttress Afghanistan's rightful status as an asset and platform of cordiality for all.

Despite being on the receiving end of provocative actions, including continuous violations across the Durand Line, Afghanistan has maintained a principled position in seeking to resolve differences through dialogue, diplomacy and peaceful means. This is particularly true in the case of our relations with Pakistan, which, unfortunately, has so far failed to respond positively, at its own cost, particularly in relation to its global reputation and standing.

Recently, we presented Pakistan with yet another opportunity to engage in comprehensive State-to-State discourse on peace, security and prosperity. This time around, we hope that we will see constructive engagement instead of plausible deniability and attempts to change the narrative. Even if embraced late, an opportunity seized is nevertheless better than one lost. There are various existing initiatives in which productive talks could take place. By the same token, we will spare no effort whatsoever in the defence of our country, people, territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

Ending violence means ensuring the security and well-being of our citizens. The Government of Afghanistan has gone to great lengths to secure sustained and durable peace for our people. The prospect of peace with the Taliban is dependent on genuine and constructive regional engagement in support of an Afghan-led process. In that regard, we believe that a paradigm shift could profoundly impact peace efforts with the Taliban in a positive way. A successful outcome, modelled on the agreement being implemented with another armed opposition group can be possible. We believe that the international community should take the necessary measures to achieve that aim.

Democratic institutions, values and principles provide the foundation for all progress made over the past 17 years in Afghanistan. We believe that a democratic society in which people are able to express their ideas, grievances and aspirations is not just a privilege, but also an imperative for social stability. The consolidation of democracy and institution-building will remain a priority of the National Unity Government. Our people are already anticipating the upcoming parliamentary and district council elections next year. The transparency, inclusivity and credibility of the polls will be crucial for our overall political stability.

In the area of reform, we are standing by our commitment to ensuring more accountable and effective institutions. A number of senior-level officials have been prosecuted and held to account for violating the rule of law. These cases have reaffirmed our promise to root out corruption in all its forms, and enhance public confidence in our reform commitments. This effort will continue with priority, and we look forward to highlighting recent achievements in this area at the upcoming senior officials meeting in Kabul to review reform commitments made in Brussels.

We consider the strategic review of the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to be an essential initiative for ensuring an adjusted United Nations role that is more responsive to the current needs of the Afghan people and better aligned with our national priority programmes. We are pleased that the imperative of a One United Nations model

concerning the delivery of development assistance has been recognized. We hope to have, by the end of this year, an outcome that will enable the United Nations to deliver on its tasks more efficiently.

Our stabilization endeavour is based on an effort for simultaneous progress in the security, social and development spheres. Despite our challenges, we are making steady progress in protecting and upholding the rights of all of our citizens, especially women, girls and children. Our resolve in this important area is reflected in our candidacy to the Human Rights Council. For us, a commitment to human rights means enabling people to live in peace and security, achieve success and meet their aspirations. Above all, it means enabling people to live in honour and dignity.

These are ideals to which we are firmly committed. Our membership in the Human Rights Council will have many benefits. It will enable us to consolidate human rights gains at home. It will also enable us to be a voice for victims of terrorism and the dozens of countries that are in conflict and post-conflict situations. We kindly urge all United Nations Member States to support our candidacy.

In conclusion, let me convey the deep appreciation of Afghanistan to the Security Council and the international community for all that they have done and continue to do in support of Afghanistan's security and stability. We stand at the crossroad of our shared endeavour. As we approach the new year 2018, it is imperative that all of us seize the opportunity before us, brought about by the new spirit of the international community's engagement in my country.

The President: I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to begin by welcoming His Excellency Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani to the Council, and I appreciate his statement. I would also like to thank Special Representative Tadamichi Yamamoto for his briefing.

We are pleased to have seen some progress in Afghanistan on electoral preparations and related assessments, including the announcement of parliamentary and district council elections for 7 July 2018. At the same time, Afghanistan continues to face profound and numerous challenges. The seriousness of the situation in Afghanistan warrants enhanced performance by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in support of the efforts of the National Unity Government towards peace and stability. The Afghan people and the world also look to the United Nations for vital support for the country's development and institution-building.

With this in mind, we welcome the Secretary-General's strategic review as a useful guide for the Council's deliberations. The Council now needs to undertake serious discussions on how to incorporate these recommendations into UNAMA's mandate. That would be an excellent opportunity to adapt UNAMA's mandate to current realities on the ground. As the lead country in the Council on Afghanistan, Japan looks forward to an intensive and interactive discussion among Council members on these and related issues.

As the Secretary-General has noted in his report (S/2017/783), there was no major progress on the peace process during the current reporting period. Japan therefore takes note of the expanded role envisioned for UNAMA as an impartial mediator for the peace process. The United Nations can make a major contribution in this area, but the National Unity Government and regional actors must work to create an environment conducive to making reconciliation possible.

We are aware of various regional and international initiatives in support of the peace process that are currently being discussed. We were encouraged by bilateral discussions between the leaders of Pakistan and Afghanistan in June to build regional confidence. We hope that these and other initiatives will yield substantive and positive results, with the participation of all key countries.

Above all, the peace and reconciliation process must be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, putting the interests of the Afghan people first. The strategic review's proposal for United Nations support to greater unity and cohesion within the National Unity Government is therefore particularly important. The Secretary-General has noted some recent improvements in achieving consensus, but much more is needed. As Japan has noted in previous briefings, the Afghan people urgently require their Government to overcome factional rivalries to meet the country's pressing security and development neds. It is essential that credible parliamentary and district council elections be held as currently scheduled and under secure conditions.

In this vein, I would also like to underline the importance of efforts to improve security in the country.

The Council and UNAMA have issued countless press statements condemning the horrifying attacks on civilians. The unfortunate reduction of diplomatic and development actors in Afghanistan following the 31 May terrorist attack was perhaps inevitable, but it has had a negative impact on both international efforts and the people of Afghanistan. We look forward to enhanced security and a restored international presence as soon as possible.

We have much work ahead on Afghanistan. The full implementation of resolution 2344 (2017) will be vital, as will the continued and productive engagement of the international community and all stakeholders. Japan reiterates its commitment to supporting Afghanistan and to the enhanced performance of UNAMA.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Yamamoto for his briefing. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/696) on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and it is good to have Foreign Minister Rabbani with us this afternoon.

It has been 16 years since the United States and the international community took action in Afghanistan. Despite all our efforts, the human cost of the conflict remains staggering. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan documented over 5,200 civilian casualties in just the first half of this year. Over 1,600 of these were fatalities, and tragically, 30 per cent of these deaths were children.

After so many years and so much American blood and treasure spent, it is useful to recite these statistics. But however war-weary we are, it is the Afghan people, of course, who pay the highest price for the conflict there. Anti-Government forces are responsible for the large majority of civilian casualties. Their actions are too often indiscriminate and disproportionate. They keep old grievances fresh and create new ones with each passing day.

We are and we should be impatient with this war. In his speech outlining a new strategy for the United States in South Asia, President Trump said that his first instinct was to pull out of Afghanistan, but after studying the issue he concluded that the men and women who have sacrificed so much in that conflict deserve to have their sacrifice honoured with victory. Turning our backs on Afghanistan would dishonour their memory by leaving the world in an even more dangerous place than when the conflict began.

That is why we welcome the results of the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. This is a timely moment for the United Nations to take a step back and to ensure that its Mission in Afghanistan is able to continue its role in promoting peace and prosperity. United Nations support for electoral reforms, peace and reconciliation, human rights and women's issues will continue to be critical in the years ahead. We look forward to continuing to work with Special Representative Yamamoto and his team in support of these shared goals.

The United States new South Asia strategy is also well timed and makes clear that, ultimately, the United States and the United Nations share the same overarching goal in Afghanistan — a durable political settlement that leads to lasting peace. The United States will continue to support the Afghan Government and security forces in their fight against the Taliban and in their efforts to combat Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and other extremist groups. We do not seek a permanent military presence in Afghanistan, but we are prepared to assist Afghan forces for as long as it takes to ensure that terrorists are never again able to exploit Afghanistan's territory as a safe haven.

Our message to the Taliban and their supporters is clear — they cannot win on the battlefield. The only path to peace is through negotiations. They must abandon violence, cut ties with international terrorism and accept the Afghan constitution. We will continue to support and encourage the immediate launch of peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, with no preconditions. We will provide support, but the Unites States is committed to an Afghan-owned political process to settle the conflict in Afghanistan. The path towards a negotiated settlement is available. The Taliban must choose to take that path.

Afghanistan's neighbours can also help. A central tenet of our new South Asia strategy is the recognition that Afghanistan's security and stability are tied to the security and stability of the entire region. We call on all regional Governments to support the Afghan Government and to do what they can to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. Critically, we also call upon Afghanistan's neighbours and all countries of the region to unconditionally cease their support for armed and violent extremist groups.

Finally, we support Council representatives travelling to Afghanistan in the coming months to assess

the political and security environment there. Given the continuing toll of the conflict and Afghanistan's importance to peace and security in Central Asia, it is critical that we see this conflict through the eyes of those living it every day. We are all impatient to end the conflict in Afghanistan, but our impatience can be an asset if it is informed by the suffering of the Afghan people and tempered by the need to never again allow terrorists a safe haven in Afghanistan.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, for his briefing and for all his ongoing work. I especially welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Mr. Salahuddin Rabani, for attending this afternoon's meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/783), which highlights the complex situation in the country, and for his special report (S/2017/696)on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Uruguay recognizes the work done by the Special Envoy and the tireless dedication of all the staff of the Mission.

Uruguay reaffirms its support for the Government of Afghanistan and encourages it to pursue its efforts to achieve a lasting peace based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity. It is critical to strengthen democratic institutions to achieve the stability of the country. In that regard, I highlight the progress made in the electoral process and the announcement of the legislative and district council elections to be held in mid-July next year.

The progress made by the Afghan Government in its programme of priority reforms, such as the fights against corruption and impunity, are encouraging. By the same token, the activities of the Government and its partners to address violence against women and girls and the increased representation of women in the High Peace Council are all positive developments.

Nevertheless, we are concerned by the lack of progress between the Government and the Taliban towards a peace process. There is no military solution to this conflict. Peace can be achieved only through dialogue and direct negotiations. The best and most effective way of weakening the terrorists will be through dialogue, unity and reconciliation among Afghanis. It is therefore essential that the maximum efforts be made to establish talks between the Government and the Taliban. Without the firm resolve of all parties, there can be no end to this protracted conflict.

The support of the United Nations and the international community for the National Unity Government of Afghanistan remains a critical element in efforts to address the major political, economic and security challenges facing the country in its efforts to build a lasting peace. We wish in that regard to express our appreciation for the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation and the interest shown by Afghanistan's partners in pursuing this initiative.

Turning to UNAMA, we welcome the initiative of cooperating with local radio stations in provinces, such as Kandahar and Kunar, to set up platforms for dialogue among communities in which tribal leaders, faith leaders, provincial authorities and women will participate in fostering dialogue and mediating between rival groups.

Despite all the efforts made to stabilize and secure the country, conditions remain unstable and have deteriorated even further, with serious impact on civilians, who are already in a difficult situation and suffering the dire consequences of the conflict. Uruguay condemns the terrorist attacks on mosques in the cities of Herat and Kabul in August, resulting inthe deaths of dozens of civilians as they prayed. Uruguay strongly condemns those and all other terrorist attacks. Unfortunately, fighting continues and is exacting a heavy toll in civilian casualties, particularly among innocent women and children. Thousands of Afghans have been forcibly displaced and to flee the violence in their communities. According to the Secretary-General's report, humanitarian access, workers and health facilities continue to be severely affected.

Uruguay calls on all parties to the conflict to respect humanitarian principles, human rights and international humanitarian law. We also reiterate our call for full compliance with resolution 2286 (2016) on the protection of the wounded and sick and medical facilities and personnel. Attacks on hospitals and medical personnel violate international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes. These crimes should not remain unpunished and the perpetrators must be held accountable for their actions. Uruguay reiterates its appreciation to all humanitarian workers who have been striving in extremely difficult conditions to provide care to the Afghan people, and who continue to fall victim to bloody attacks.

In conclusion, echoing Mr. Yamamoto's simile of a few days ago, the support of all and at every level, through understanding and ownership, is needed to continue weaving this intricate tapestry.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to thank Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his analysis of the evolving circumstances in Afghanistan. And, of course, we listened carefully to the statement by Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. We agree with many of the views expressed in the most recent quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2017/783), and for our part would like to make the following comments:

We are concerned about the deteriorating military situation and increasing terrorist activity in Afghanistan. We continue to be particularly worried about the activities of the Afghan wing of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its attempt to establish itself in the northern provinces. According to our estimates, the group currently has an impressive total of more than 7,000 fighters in the country. ISIL's expansionist drive represents a real threat to the security of our friends in Central Asia and to the southern regions of Russia. Nor can we ignore the problem of the unidentified helicopters in northern Afghanistan that have been observed providing assistance to ISIL fighters. This situation must be thoroughly investigated and any such covert activity stopped immediately.

The drug problem in Afghanistan is getting worse. We are concerned about the continuing increase in the acreage used for drugs and the rise in their production. Narco-dollars now account for a considerable part of terrorists' income — as much as 35 or 40 per cent — in Afghanistan. We therefore want international efforts to combat the Afghan drug trade to be enhanced. We believe there is good potential for strengthening cooperation in that regard between Afghanistan and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

Regrettably, we have been compelled to conclude that the protracted and major presence in Afghanistan of military contingents from the United States and NATO has not helped to stabilize the military and political situation. We also have questions about their intention to shift the focus of their tactics to using force to put pressure on the armed opposition and individual countries in the region. As we know, that approach has not had positive results in the past and has served only to escalate the conflict.

We firmly believe that at this stage the emphasis should be on negotiation efforts, which will enable us to launch the national reconciliation process as soon as possible. Needless to say, it is Kabul that should play the principal role in that process, but the international partners providing external support for it should cooperate on an equal basis and take into account the national interests of every country in the region, without exception. Unfortunately, despite the presence of numerous international entities in this area, we have failed to achieve the main goal of involving the Taliban in peace negotiations. In that context, we should consider the Moscow format for consultations on Afghanistan — in which almost all the interested parties, including the Central Asian States, are participating — as the optimal platform for substantive talks on national reconciliation and establishing a direct dialogue between Kabul and the Taliban. We believe the format is fully in line with the requirements.

We continue to believe that UNAMA plays an important role in coordinating international assistance to Afghanistan, and we took note of the Secretary-General's special report on the strategic review of its mandate (S/2017/696). However, we should note the world's growing realization of the importance of the regional context in settling the Afghan crisis, and therefore of the potential of well-established entities in the area, especially the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). We hope to see success through the revived mechanism of the SCO Afghanistan Contact Group, whose first meeting is scheduled for 11 October.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and to welcome His Excellency Mr. Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and thank him for his valuable briefing.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2017/696) on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), conducted to evaluate the Mission's operations, activities and effectiveness, shows the important role that the United Nations plays in Afghanistan.

In the light of the unprecedented increase this year in security incidents and terrorist attacks by the Taliban, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and other terrorist organizations, it appears that the international and national efforts have not been enough to eliminate these organizations. What is needed is an integrated strategy on the political, security, economic and social fronts that is owned by the Afghan Government and supported by its neighbours and international partners, led by the United Nations. Based on the traditional ties that connect Egypt and Afghanistan and the mutual influence and the close links between the security and political conditions in Central Asia and the Middle East, we reaffirm our support to the Afghan Government, its war on terrorism and its efforts to extend its control and sovereignty throughout its territory. We welcome the arrangements and preparations for conducting the elections scheduled for the middle of next year. We also support international and regional efforts aimed at supporting the country's socioeconomic development, including the resettlement and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons and refugees.

The drug trade continues to be the main source of funding for the arms trade in Afghanistan, and is therefore the most dangerous source of support for extremist groups and terrorist organizations, whether through money or weapons. The intertwined interests and ties between organized criminal networks and terrorists embody the challenges facing Afghanistan and indeed the entire region of Central Asia. It is therefore important to intensify and coordinate the international and regional efforts with those of the Afghan Government with a view to combating drug trafficking in the context of the fight against terrorism. In that regard, we would like to highlight the potentially valuable role to be played by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the relevant regional organizations.

The recommendations in the strategic review of UNAMA, as well as the statements by Mr. Rabbani and Mr. Yamamoto, reflect the importance of coming up with a new vision in the search for a comprehensive peace. Those recommendations and approaches show the urgent need to build and sustain peace, with the United Nations working together with Afghanistan in the upcoming period. It is therefore important to combine the fundamental elements of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan — political, economic, social and institutional — with implementation geared towards a comprehensive approach to overcome the challenges that currently exist in Afghanistan, especially given the problem of the country's reliance on grants from the international community, which constitute over 60 per cent of the Government's budget. We believe that the main composition of UNAMA over the next period must be based on resources and skills that are primarily directed towards capacity-building in Afghan institutions to improve the State's ability to undertake its responsibilities, maintain security, create job opportunities, revitalize the national economy and offer basic services to the Afghan people. That objective requires close coordination and cooperation among UNAMA, the various United Nations components that are present and the development sector in Afghanistan.

In line with what I have said here, through its Agency of Partnership for Development to offering, Egypt is committedto providing advanced specialized training courses to Afghan security and police personnel. In addition, Egypt has sent Arabic language experts to the University of Kabul and has accorded particular focus to the areas of justice, culture, health care and nursing, agriculture and irrigation and the banking sector. Egypt continues to offer humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. We call upon the international community to stand behind Afghanistan and understand that the country's stability is the key to stability in Southern and Central Asia. That is the message that Egypt took great care to emphasize during its participation last week in the meetings of senior officials of the Heart of Asia Process, which were held on the sidelines of the General Assembly high-level segment.

We believe that UNAMA can play a pivotal role in continuing to mobilize the international community and help it focus on the priorities of establishing and sustaining peace and eliminating the causes of instability. Instability cannot become Afghanistan's inevitable destiny.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the convening of this open meeting on Afghanistan. China also welcomes the presence of His Excellency Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, at the meeting. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tadamichi Yamamoto for his briefing.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan have a direct bearing on the fundamental interests of the Afghan people, as well as on regional security, stability, development and prosperity. China applauds the efforts of the Afghan Government in safeguarding national stability, facilitating national reconciliation and promoting economic development. China underscores the important role that neighbouring and regional countries playon the question of Afghanistan. Afghanistan continues to face a number of political, economic and security challenges. In order to help Afghanistan overcome such challenges, the international community should continue to provide firm support in the following areas.

First, maintaining peace and stability constitutes the basis of Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic development. The international community should continue to support the capacity of the Afghan national security forces and contribute to the country's ability to defend itself so that Afghanistan can effectively respond to threats, such as terrorism, transnational organized crime and drug trafficking. We support an active role by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and other actors in helping Afghanistan fight terrorism. The international community should step up its coordination and cooperation in combating terrorist elements in Afghanistan.

Secondly, political dialogue is the only viable solution for the question of Afghanistan. Actors in Afghanistan should put the country's long-term interests and their people's welfare first and actively participate in the reconciliation process. The international community should continue to promote the realization of a broad, inclusive political settlement that is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. Furthermore, the international community should engage all Afghan parties concerned for the early launch of peace talks. We welcome the assistance provided by relevant regional countries and mechanisms.

Thirdly, strengthening governance is an important guarantee for Afghanistan's peace and reconstruction process. Ultimately, Afghan affairs should be handled by the Afghan people themselves. All political actors in Afghanistan must achieve unity and resolve their differences through dialogue and consultations. The international community must fully respect the right of the Afghan people to independently choose their political system and development path. Moreover, on the basis of Afghanistan's national development strategy and actual needs, the international community should provide targeted assistance to the Afghan Government to improve its capacity to govern.

Fourthly, integration into regional development constitutes an important path towards the achievement of peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan. The international community must make good on its pledges to provide assistance and support Afghanistan in promoting economic and social development. With its unique resources and geographical advantages, Afghanistan enjoys great prospects for regional cooperation efforts. Resolution 2344 (2017) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions stipulate that all parties must create a community of a common future in the spirit of cooperation and principle of win-win, and promote the economic development of Afghanistan and regional cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative.

China has taken note of the Secretary-General's special report (S/2017/696) on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), officially submitted in August pursuant to resolution 2344 (2017). We hope that, through the review, the United Nations will be able to further optimize and re-prioritize the tasks of the Mission in accordance with the current situation, maximize the allocation of resources, improve the management processes and enhance the Mission's ability to deal with complex situations. China commends the work carried out by UNAMA and hopes that the Mission will respect the sovereignty, leading role and ownership of Afghanistan, continue to facilitate the political reconciliation process and promote the economic development of the country. Furthermore, China hopes that UNAMA will play a positive role in helping Afghanistan to restore stability, promote national reconciliation, improve governance and promote economic development.

China will continue to support the work of UNAMA. China has always played a constructive role in promoting the reconciliation process in Afghanistan. During a recent visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan by Minister for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi, the three countries agreed to establish a trilateral foreign ministers' dialogue mechanism, support the relaunch of the Afghanistan-Pakistan-China-United States Quadrilateral Coordination Group and the reactivatation of the International Shanghai Cooperation Organization Afghanistan Contact Group. Afghanistan and Pakistan also agreed to establish a

bilateral crisis-management mechanism. China will continue to support Afghanistan's security capacity-building as well as the country's efforts to promote economic and social development. China stands ready to work together with the international community for the early realization of peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tadamichi Yamamoto for his briefing today. At the outset, I want to express my gratitude and that of my Government for the work that he and his team are doing in extremely challenging circumstances. I also thank Foreign Minister Rabbani for his intervention today.

As both Mr. Rabbani and Mr. Tadamichi made clear, we simply cannot afford to lose sight of Afghanistan. Despite years of progress, Afghanistan continues to face tough security and development challenges, while the human cost after years of fighting and violence only continues to grow. Our work is therefore not done, and it is clear that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) still has a vital part play.

Just as Afghanistan today is not the same as it was 10 years ago, it is right that UNAMA changes too, to fit the current realities on the ground. We therefore welcome the review into how the Mission can best support Afghanistan in a way that aligns with the Government's own priorities. We share much of the analysis in the strategic review, with its focus on streamlining the work of the Mission towards a targeted set of outcomes. The report (S/2017/696) contains a number of recommendations that should strengthen its work. The key thing now is implementation.

We will continue our close work with UNAMA on donor coordination, the rule of law, anti-corruption efforts and support for human rights, especially womens' rights. We welcome the recognition of the importance of the national civilian presence offered by UNAMA's network of field officers. The United Kingdom strongly supports the continued national presence. Those officers are an important symbol to local communities. They will also have a role to play in delivering successful elections in 2018 and 2019, and can make a contribution to underpinning local peace negotiations in the future.

The report sets out three strategic priorities corresponding to support for political stability, peace, and economic and social development. We believe that putting greater focus on support for an Afghan-led peace process is the right way forward. Only by establishing a credible peace process can Afghanistan move forward. We all have a role to play in that, including the United Nations. We very much hope, therefore, that members of the Security Council can agree to adjust the mandate of UNAMA in order to incorporate those recommendations. That would ensure that UNAMA is better able to focus on the critical task of supporting the peace process. We look forward to discussing this matter with Council members in the weeks ahead.

Before concluding I want to say a word on the outcome of the United States-South Asia strategy review. The United Kingdom and United States are close partners in Afghanistan, and so we welcome the United States long-term commitment to the people and the Government there. Despite the challenges, which we have heard a lot about today, we agree that it is important that we continue to provide support on issues such as security, development and governance. That is crucial to building a stable Afghan State and to reducing the terrorist threat to us all.

It is in all our interests that Afghanistan become safer and more prosperous, that is why we announced our own troop increase in June and confirmed development support of up to $1 billion until 2020. We also welcomed the restated commitment that ultimately the only way to a political settlement will be through negotiations between the Afghan Government and the Taliban. That is why we encourage Foreign Minister Rabbani and his colleagues in the Government to take this opportunity to reach out to the Taliban to establish a credible peace process. We owe it to the people of Afghanistan, who have suffered so much during decades of violence, to do all that can be done to institute a peace process. It will be beholden on us all — within the Council, in the United Nations system more broadly and, of course, the Government of Afghanistan — to support such a peace process.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): We would like to align ourselves with the statement to be made later on behalf of the European Union. I should like to make a few points on behalf of Sweden.

Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Yamamoto for his excellent briefing today and for the work done by him and his team. We also very much appreciate the presence of Mr. Rabbani here today.

Impressive progress has been achieved over the past 15 years in consolidating Afghanistan's democratic institutions and protecting human rights and civil liberties for the Afghan people. At the same time, persistent high levels of violence remain a major concern. As highlighted by the Secretary-General, the increase in sectarian attacks is very troubling. Civilians in Afghanistan continue to disproportionately shoulder the burden of the conflict. The statistics suggest that their burden is not getting any lighter. The year 2016 saw record levels of civilian casualties in Afghanistan, including an increase in the number of women and children killed or injured. We have to try to stop this together, and we call on all sides to do their utmost to protect the civilian populations as a matter of priority.

Building peaceful and inclusive societies is not easy. It takes patience, courage and determination from all parties. A politically negotiated settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan is the only way to achieve sustainable peace. It is therefore imperative that both sides take steps urgently to engage in dialogue to reach a political settlement and end violence. Those with some influence over the Taliban have a special responsibility in that regard.

Regional tensions continue to undermine long-term stability and economic growth in Afghanistan. Sustained and constructive engagement by countries in the region will be essential for a long-term solution. All stakeholders, especially neighbouring countries, must assume their responsibilities and work together towards a sustainable peace. The Kabul process to foster a genuine peace and reconciliation should be supported, including by the United Nations and all other bodies.

We fully support the Government's efforts to put in place a reform process to ensure strong and independent institutions and a robust democratic process. We have high expectations of the Government's reform agenda and for its delivery. The upcoming elections are one key element of that effort. We welcome the fact that a date for district council and parliamentary elections has now been set. The United Nations has an important supportive role to play, but the main ownership and responsibility to ensure meaningful elections of course rests with the Afghan authorities.

Since 2002, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has played an essential role in support of the Afghan people. We welcome the UNAMA strategic review and its recommendations, in particular its important emphasis on conflict prevention and sustaining peace. That emphasis is an acknowledgement that the conflict in Afghanistan is not over. Despite our efforts, including the tireless work of UNAMA and the whole of the United Nations system, the country has not yet entered a post-conflict phase. Therefore, a continued focus on supporting peace efforts remains a key priority. With the new United States strategy, there is now an opportunity for enhanced diplomatic and political efforts.

Concrete measures must be taken to strengthen the implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security. As recommended by the Secretary-General, UNAMA has an important role to play in supporting an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process that includes women, in line with the Constitution. We further welcome the intention to relocate the Senior Gender Adviser to the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, as outlined in the strategic review, and we appreciateUNAMA's integrated reporting on these issues.

In order to fulfil the important responsibility of the United Nations in Afghanistan, the UNAMA leadership and the United Nations country team should make full use of the review and fully implement its recommendations. They should do so in the spirit of the One United Nations initiative and the sustaining peace agenda by working in a coordinated fashion for peace, development, human rights and humanitarian assistance. Socioeconomic improvements and service delivery throughout the country continues to be critical to maintaining support and momentum for the peace process.

Sweden's support to the people of Afghanistan has remained firm for over three decades. In line with the Secretary-General's approach, we have adjusted our policy and our very concrete support to focus more on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, including through mediation training for Afghan women. I would like to assure Afghanistan's Minister for Foreign Minister Affairs that, as the Afghan people enter this next phase in efforts towards peace, they can count on my country's continued support for State- and peacebuilding efforts towards a prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I join earlier speakers in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto for his briefing. I take

this opportunity to thank him and all members and personnel of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their dedication in carrying out their duties under challenging circumstances. I also thank Foreign Minister Rabbani for his substantial briefing and wish him success in his efforts to bring peace and stability to his country.

The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/686) provides realistic assessments and important insights into the work of UNAMA and the United Nations country team in Afghanistan. More important, it contains constructive recommendations that are crucial to maximizing the potential of all the efforts and resources of the United Nations and the international community. Kazakhstan looks forward to the deliberations over, and eventual implementation of, those recommendations, which would enable us to then leverage the comparative advantages of the United Nations and the international community to support the reconstruction and redevelopment of Afghanistan.

On the political track, allow me to reiterate Kazakhstan's firm support for the reconciliation and reintegration efforts undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan. We also commend the Afghan Government's continuing commitment and efforts to address the increasing political, economic and security challenges faced by the country. We take those as strong testimony of Afghanistan's aspiration to achieve national unity and stability, which could contribute to regional stability.

Kazakhstan is also pleased to note the encouraging progress made on the electoral issue and the gain in its credibility, particularly expressed through the setting of 7 July 2018 as the date for legislative and local elections. We welcome their inclusive, transparent and participatory character.

We urge the Government to swiftly implement its progressive strategies, such as the four-year plan on security sector reform and many others in different dimensions, which, in our view, will further strengthen the capacity of their national institutions.

Kazakhstan reiterates that a peaceful political settlement is the only way to achieve sustainable peace and stability in the country. We remain hopeful that relevant talks will resume at the earliest convenience. It should be an Afghan-led and -owned process.

Despite some noteworthy developments, Kazakhstan remains concerned by the fragility and volatility of the security situation in the country. As reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/783), the conflict continued unabated throughout the country during the reporting period. Furthermore, the significant increase in violent incidents involving the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province affiliates and the Taliban have resulted in further hardship endured by the Afghan people, as well as the loss of innocent civilian lives. Kazakhstan strongly supports all regional and global initiatives, including the efforts of regional organizations to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan commends the positive trends in the ongoing efforts to counter narcotics in Afghanistan. Countries in the region and regional organizations are actively engaged in facing the challenge. We also recognize important steps towards meeting and eventually adopting of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime-World Health Organization International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders. I am also pleased to state that, in the intersessional period, my country hosted a Precursor Case Meeting in Almaty in the framework of regional cooperation on counter-narcotics, held at the headquarters of Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors.

Kazakhstan believes that at this stage it remains imperative for the United Nations and the international community to continue to lend their support, encouragement and assistance to Afghanistan through reconstruction and redevelopment efforts to rebuild the country. Their political and development activities should be in greater alignment with the priorities set by the Afghan Government. We are heartened to hear that the Afghan Government prioritizes the social and economic development of Afghanistan, with the broad involvement of international business in the implementation of concrete economic projects. The core of our efforts is to help Afghanistan set up its image as an attractive partner with great potential. Our Afghani brothers and sisters need joint projects, job creation and the facilitation of the development of communication and trade.

All Central Asian States are committed to the development of long-term cooperation with

Afghanistan and intraregional connectivity in the areas of infrastructure, transit and transport, energy and other fields, so as to contribute to Afghanistan's integration into our region's trade and economic cooperation as a new model of relations with this brotherly country.

My country therefore proposes a new approach, based on a security and development nexus. That approach is based on our assumption that economic development will create the prerequisites for a political settlement and a solution to security issues. We would like to stress once again that there can be no security without development, and no development without security.

The plight of children continues to be severely affected by the escalation of the conflict. Afghanistan has taken many commendable steps towards ensuring its national security forces are child-free. The Government is also promoting age-assessment guidelines that we hope will be widely implemented. However, Kazakhstan is alarmed that during the current reporting period the conflicts in Afghanistan recorded a high number of child casualties — with up to 50 boys reportedly recruited by Da'esh — and welcomes the joint efforts of UNAMA and UNICEF to address that challenge. Attacks on schools and educational personnel is also an alarming trend, as they prevent access to education and a return to normalcy. In that regard, we urge the Government to maintain its commitment to the full implementation of its action plans and road maps to that end, and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

Finally, Kazakhstan is pleased that UNAMA and the Government of Afghanistan have continued to maintain a close partnership between themselves and with other stakeholders, which is vital to ensuring sustainable peace and stability in the country. We hope that these will lead to a more productive and effective collaboration within the country, the United Nations system and the international community. Let me conclude by reaffirming Kazakhstan's sincere commitment to supporting the Afghan Government in its effort to achieve peace, security and stability.

Mr. Fesko (Ukraine): I thank Special Representative Yamamoto for his briefing and express my appreciation for Foreign Minister Rabbani's presence and his remarks.

The overall picture as presented in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/783) revives disconcerting feelings and causes renewed concern over the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. We welcome the National Unity Government's firm commitment and steps taken to promote the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned inclusive peace process that would embrace, inter alia, factions of the Taliban demonstrating openness to negotiations. We also welcome the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in support of the Government's initiatives and its facilitation of local-level peacebuilding.

However, despite those efforts, no significant progress has been made in fostering negotiations. We recognize that the Independent Election Commission announced the date of the long-awaited parliamentary and local elections to be held in 2018, as well as presented sound proposals to guarantee the credibility of the electoral process through, inter alia, the use of voter verification procedures and the introduction of polling and results management technologies. Yet there is still no political decision on the implementation of those proposals.

It is praiseworthy that the Government took into serious consideration the fact that international financial support to Afghanistan, which is key for securing steady improvement of the economic and social situation in the country, depends upon the successful implementation of the anti-corruption and anti-drug policy. Since corruption has [illegible] facet of the country's life, resolute steps undertaken by the Anti-Corruption Justice Center in tackling such a complex problem are a welcome development. The implementation of those steps requires powerful impetus and, importantly, political commitment at every level of local and central Government.

We also commend the dedicated work of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in promoting and monitoring human rights and the investigation of human rights abuses. In particular, we welcome the launch of a national inquiry on the protection of the rights of victims of armed conflict and terrorism. We call on the Government of Afghanistan to cooperate fully with the Commission in that regard, as well as in investigating abuses against women, children and human rights defenders.

The terrorism threat remains an uphill challenge in Afghanistan. Despite having been partially degraded by Afghan and international military operations, it remains increasingly diverse. Attempts by the Taliban to take

over a number of strategic areas and communication lines and destroy critical infrastructure, as well as their attacks on health-care facilities and their forced closure, should be considered as acts of terror. The Taliban's continued influence over regional Al-Qaida affiliates, whose fighters from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region have integrated into the Taliban, which has led to an increase in its military capabilities, is extremely worrying. Attempts by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to expand its presence in the north of the country are equally disturbing.

Against that backdrop, I would like to stress the need for concerted actions by Afghanistan's international partners to reduce terrorism activity, facilitate the safe return of refugees and promote the economic recovery of the country.

Although there can be no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan, a military dimension is vital. In that context, we welcome the recently announced new strategy of the United States for Afghanistan, as well as the commitments of other NATO member States, which ought to contribute to increasing the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts of the Afghan national security and defence forces.

Yet, without constructive dialogue from all regional actors and their practical engagement in eradicating terrorists' safe havens and depriving them of sources of financing, especially drug trafficking, all of those achievements will be irrelevant. Double-dealing should no longer be tolerated.

The United Nations plays a key role in efforts to make Afghanistan stable and prosperous. Given the current state of play, we need a strong UNAMA that is able to effectively deliver its mandated responsibilities. In that regard, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for providing us with the report (S/2017/696) on the strategic review of UNAMA and express our support for its swift implementation. Among the Mission's major tasks should be the provision of mediation services in support of the national reconciliation process, the promotion of reforms, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law and support for humanitarian and development projects.

The upcoming 2018-2019 election cycle, along with the subsequent evolution of the political environment in the country, will also require UNAMA's special focus on the efficiency of all of its components, especially its field presences. Yet we fully agree with the Secretary-General that, while the situation on the ground remains increasingly insecure and fragile, the security of UNAMA personnel should certainly remain a priority.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Ukraine's strong support for UNAMA. Its activities in Afghanistan are vital for creating a sound foundation for peace, security and prosperity both in the country and in the wider region.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, first of all, to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, for his briefing and, through him, to pay tribute again to United Nations personnel working in difficult conditions in Afghanistan. I also warmly welcome the presence of Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and I thank him for his intervention.

France associates itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union. I shall confine myself to four main points.

First, the continued increase in the level of violence and the resulting deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remain a major concern for France. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/783) unfortunately reminds us, and as others have recalled here, the Afghan population remains the first victim of the conflict and women and children continue to pay the highest price. Afghan forces, whose commitment and courage I commend, are continuing with their operations and they have been making significant progress. However, armed confrontations and repeated terrorist attacks continue to destabilize the country as a whole. In that regard, France takes very seriously the establishment and proliferation of armed and terrorist groups in Afghanistan and in the region. France shares the determination of the Afghan authorities and our allies to fight terrorism and welcomes any decision that contributes to achieving that objective, in compliance with international law, such as the new strategy of the United States for Afghanistan and South-East Asia. In order to succeed, that counter-terrorism effort must also be supported by all countries in the region.

The humanitarian situation, which is already particularly fragile, has been aggravated by the conflict and the collapse of the economy. The massive return of refugees from Pakistan and Iran is a serious challenge for Afghan authorities. In that regard, France

encourages the Government of Afghanistan to continue its efforts to ensure equal treatment of all refugees and displaced persons and welcomes the remarkable actions taken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Secondly, the extremely volatile security and humanitarian environment makes the unity of the Afghan Government and its perseverance in reforms more important than ever. There is no alternative to Afghan cohesion and collective determination to deepen and consolidate Afghan democracy. The pursuit of ongoing reforms aimed at achieving a more effective Government that is more capable of serving the population must remain a priority. In particular, that applies in particular to electoral reform, where progress has been made. France particularly welcomes the announcement of the holding of legislative elections on 7 July 2018. Preparations undertaken by the Independent Election Commission must continue, along with the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), in order to enable free and transparent elections as scheduled. Reforms in the fight against corruption and drug trafficking, which continue to fuel the Taliban's insurgency, must also be pursued with determination. In terms of human rights, the situation of women and children is still very precarious. It is essential that the Afghan authorities continue to mobilize efforts to fully implement their commitments to women's rights and the protection of children.

Thirdly, the stabilization of Afghanistan will require a negotiated political solution and national reconciliation. France hopes that the peace process can be resumed by Afghan actors as soon as possible, with the support of countries of the region and the international community. The sincere commitment and unambiguous support for peace by all Afghanistan's neighbours is essential. We call for renewed efforts and concrete commitments in that domain.

Against that backdrop — and this will be my fourth point — it is reassuring that we have the support of the United Nations and particularly of UNAMA, which has never been stronger. France thanks the Secretary-General and his team for their very serious work carried out in the context of UNAMA's strategic review. We support the recommendations made in the report (S/2017/696), which should make it possible to streamline its work. The proposal to refocus the work of the Mission is particularly welcome. Such refocusing will allow it to distribute its effort across four pillars: contributing to the establishment of peace in Afghanistan; facilitating the engagement of the countries of the region; moderating and supporting the dialogue between the Government and Afghan political forces; and coordinating among international donors.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating my country's full support for the Afghan Government and the work carried out by the United Nations in Afghanistan in the quest for lasting peace and safe and dignified lives for all people of the country.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered by the observer of the European Union later this afternoon. I would nevertheless like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

First of all, we thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/696) and we strongly welcome the strategic review. We thank Special Representative Yamamoto for his comprehensive briefing and, like others, we wish to express our appreciation for the tireless efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) aimed at promoting peace and coordinating international community assistance in an extremely challenging environment.

Italy welcomes the presence of His Excellency Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. I thank him for his briefing. It was the first of many, I hope.

We continue to witness an unending escalation of the intensity of the conflict in Afghanistan and the terrible consequences that it has brought, starting with severe casualties, particularly among those who are most vulnerable, such as women and children. Terrorists remain a grave and dangerous threat to the country's stability, as we have seen from the devastating and heinous attacks that have taken place in recent months.

This situation requires us to renew our collective support for the National Unity Government's efforts to bring peace and stability to the country. Faced with the relentless violence from the Taliban and from terrorist groups, the Afghan national security and defence forces continue to play a pivotal role in defending the substantial progress made in Afghanistan since 2001. We pay tribute to their courage and dedication.

Italy renews its active commitment to continuing to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces

in the framework of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission. But in order for lasting peace and security to be brought to the country, the solution must ultimately be a political one achieved through negotiations between the Government and armed opposition groups in the framework of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process that respects the country's Constitution. This process will require the full and concrete support of Afghanistan's partners. We therefore welcome the new United States strategy for the country, which confirms the intention to work towards achieving this ultimate outcome. We also welcome renewed United States commitment to the broader fight against terrorism. In that context, the role of regional actors will be crucial. We need genuine and constructive cooperation from all regional stakeholders in a common and resolute fight against terrorism and in promoting the conditions for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Italy supports all diplomatic initiatives, such as the Kabul process, aimed at improving cooperation. We also share the goal of fostering a national consensus around peace reconciliation, which will require the active and inclusive participation of all sectors of Afghan society, including women, whose role is of particular significance in that regard. To that end, we encourage the full implementation of the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

Equally important in the process of achieving lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan is for the Government and its institutions to gain the full confidence of the citizens of the country by exercising good governance and by meeting the country's development needs. This is all the more critical given the alarming levels of poverty and unemployment, especially among young people. That will require the full and comprehensive implementation of internal reform. We acknowledge the substantial progress made in the electoral process, but several important issues need to be resolved in order to ensure that the upcoming elections are fully transparent and credible. The fight against corruption must be carried forward with steadfast determination. We acknowledge that positive results are beginning to emerge in that regard through the action of such institutions as the Office of the Attorney General and the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre.

Promoting and defending women's rights will continue to be a top priority, as is the full empowerment of women within Afghani society. Further efforts are required to ensure that there is no risk of reversal in this area.

The upcoming meeting of senior officials in Kabul will provide an important opportunity to measure progress against reform benchmarks in the framework of a partnership between Afghanistan and its donors, which was reaffirmed at the Brussels Conference last year. The international community's commitment to helping to bring peace, stability and self-reliance to Afghanistan and its people remains steadfast, and Italy is determined to continue to play an integral part in this process.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal would like to begin by welcoming the participation of His Excellency Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Afghanistan, in today's meeting, as well as his positive contribution thereto. In addition, my delegation would like to thank Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and his team, for the outstanding work they are doing in the field to help Afghans find their way, but also with the prospect of implementing the recommendations of the UNAMA strategic review, decided upon by the Security Council.

Like previous speakers, the Senegalese delegation is also concerned that the security situation in the country remains difficult, with the intensification of armed clashes and suicide attacks, which, according to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/783), have increased by 5 per cent compared to the same period last year, resulting in a large number of casualties, mostly women and children.

At the same time, the political atmosphere seems increasingly tense, in particular given the announcement of the upcoming parliamentary and local district council elections, to be held in July 2018. To make the situation more complicated, terrorist organizations such as Da'esh take advantage of that environment in order to deepen their roots in the territory by engaging in all kinds of criminal activities, including drug trafficking. Nonetheless, we can welcome the long but continued improvement in the cooperation relationship with neighbouring countries and the ongoing support for Afghanistan from the international community, including the United Nations and its Security Council through UNAMA.

Given the sheer human cost of the conflict in Afghanistan, Senegal strongly condemns attacks against civilians. Let me repeat that most of the victims of those attacks are women and children. We would like to pay tribute to all of the health workers, humanitarian workers and coalition soldiers who continue working in Afghanistan, sometimes at the cost of their lives. In that regard, the protection of women deserves special attention. That is why Senegal is launching an appeal to donors to enhance their support for the Afghan national plan of action for women and peace and security.

We reaffirm the urgent need to protect schools, hospitals and places of worship, which have been the main targets of suicide attacks, in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law. I would like to welcome the launch of a national inquiry on the protection of the rights of victims of armed conflict and terrorism by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, as well as to say that we need to pay careful attention to their conclusions.

The difficult situation in Afghanistan raises the key issues of security sector reform, strengthening the operational capacities of the Afghan armed forces, addressing the challenge of corruption, improving military command and aligning military operations with long-term political objectives. The work of UNAMA is crucial in that regard, and the reform is all the more important as the Afghan forces are facing a reduction in the number of troops because of numerous desertions and recruitment difficulties. In that context, it is encouraging to note the decision taken at the most recent meeting of NATO Defence Ministers to increase the number of troops deployed in the Resolute Support Mission as well as the choice made by United States President Donald Trump to keep United States forces in Afghanistan in the framework of the new American strategy in the country.

As is the case in the majority of countries in conflict, security and stability in Afghanistan will depend upon its relations with its neighbouring countries for a long time to come. Senegal is therefore pleased by the continued improvement in cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, in particular through implementing crisis-management mechanisms for emergency communication, as well as finalizing an agreement on carrying out operations along the border. Also included in this positive dynamic is the cooperation with Central Asian countries, including in the areas of transport and communications, as well as with the Islamic Republic of Iran for the conclusion of a strategic cooperation agreement.

All those positive developments will allow UNAMA to better focus on its mandate of supporting Afghan stakeholders so as to build together a safe and stable Afghanistan through dialogue and political efforts, in particular during the period of upcoming elections for 2018. The bold reforms undertaken by the Afghan Government lead us to remain hopeful in that regard.

Mr. Zambrana (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia is grateful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan Yamamoto for his excellent briefing, and we take this opportunity to express our firm support to him in carrying out the work that has been entrusted him. We also welcome His Excellency Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, and thank him for the information he has provided.

On the political front, we acknowledge the efforts of the Government and the people of Afghanistan in taking the electoral process forward, which will allow them to strengthen their democratic institutions, and we reiterate our commitment to upholding its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. We recall the interconnected nature of the challenges facing Afghanistan and sustainable progress in terms of security, development and governance, which are mutually reinforcing. We stress the Government's resolve to implement its four-year plan on security sector reform aimed at increasing the capability of Afghan security forces despite the current difficulties involved in sustaining them.

We believe that strengthening and unifying the security forces are key elements to combating the threat of destabilization and, above all, the barbarity of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, whose attacks and criminal acts we condemn in the strongest terms possible. Unfortunately, there was evidence during the reporting period under review of a clear increase in the number of attacks against civilian installations, such as schools and training centres, as well as attacks against medical and humanitarian personnel and medical facilities. Between January and August alone, 86 incidents were recorded, doubling the total number of incidents reported for all of 2016, which stood at 41. In that regard, Bolivia reiterates in the strongest terms its condemnation of all terrorist acts as criminal and

unjustifiable, wherever, whenever and by whomever they the are committed.

Moreover, according to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/783), random constraints have been placed on the deployment of a humanitarian assistance by various parties to the conflict, and 214 incidents have been registered since January that cost the lives of 12 aid and medical workers. In that regard, we reiterate to the parties and those involved in the conflict that they must allow and ensure security and safety of civil and humanitarian installations and their staff, while avoiding identifying them as military targets, for whatever reason, and observing the principles of international humanitarian law.

I would be remiss if I did not express our concern about the high number of internally displaced persons, which, according to the report of the Secretary-General, increased to more than 32,000 individuals during the period under review. That figure adds to the more than 200,000 new internally displaced persons worldwide this year. We call for the pooling of efforts to support the return of citizens and their sustainable reintegration to their countries of origin. Accordingly, international organizations must provide concrete support for Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons so as to facilitate their voluntary and safe return.

We commend the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) for the work that it continues to carry in Afghanistan by providing education and training in transit centres so as to ensure that refugees returning to their places of origin are aware of the presence and the danger of anti-personnel landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. Nevertheless, the continued risk represented by anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices found on the ground have been reflected in the increase in the number of victims as compared with last year's statistics. Consequently, we call for the urgent implementation of resolution 2365 (2017) and for the continued support of UNMAS in the removal of those explosive devices, which pose a threat to the security of the civilian population.

Bolivia is grateful to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for the work that it has carried out in providing logistical and technical support for the Afghanistan-led process, while supporting democratic and governmental initiatives to bring about a peaceful settlement to the conflict. We reiterate the crucial importance of promoting regional cooperation as an effective way to promote security, stability and economic and social development in Afghanistan. We also wish to express our deep gratitude and appreciation for the work and carried out by various United Nations agencies throughout in providing humanitarian assistance in such a difficult context given the high risk involved in realizing their work.

Lastly, we convey our support for the political dialogue under way in Kabul and reiterate that there is no military solution to the situation. On the contrary, that dialogue must be an inclusive process led by and for the Afghan people.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of Ethiopia.

We express our appreciation to Special Representative Yamamoto for his comprehensive briefing on the latest report (S/2017/783) of the Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan and the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We would like to thank the Secretary-General for the report, which highlights the key political and security challenges facing Afghanistan. We are pleased to have the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan with us and to having had the opportunity to listen to him.

We take note of the new political dynamic emerging in the political and security sphere, particularly with respect to the consolidation of authority within the National Unity Government and the consensus reached on various issues, such as on high-level appointments, between President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah. We also recognize the progress made by the Afghan Government on its reform agenda, particularly in the areas of anti-corruption activities — without understating existing complications concerning the political situation.

Political temperatures will certainly rise during the next several months leading up to parliamentary and district council elections in July 2018, which were announced by the Independent Election Commission. It is encouraging that many opposition groups are motivated to take part in the upcoming election. It will be absolutely important to establish the necessary political atmosphere for the holding of peaceful and credible elections. One hopes that the security situation will not be a major obstacle to achieving that goal. What the country is facing in that area is indeed formidable.

As the Secretary-General has said, the lack of progress in negotiations between the Government and Taliban remains a serious challenge. Conditions in rural areas cannot be overlooked, where the Taliban appears to have ratcheted up its activities. We appreciate UNAMA's efforts to continue formal dialogue with the Taliban and with three other local peace initiatives to seek a political solution to the continued conflict. No doubt, the long-term security and stability of Afghanistan can be ensured only through a comprehensive and inclusive Afghan-led, Afghan-owned political process. We agree with the Secretary-General that a regional environment conducive to an Afghan-led peace process is indeed essential. The role of the countries of the region is also very critical in creating the necessary conditions for the fight against terrorism and the advancement of peace efforts. In that regard, we take note of the bilateral and multilateral engagement by the Afghan Government with neighbours and other countries of the region. The promotion of regional cooperation would certainly advance peace, security and development in Afghanistan and in the region. We also take note of the incremental progress made with Pakistan. We hope that it will be strengthened further.

Afghanistan faces enormous security, social and economic challenges and, without continued inclusive economic growth and development, sustained peace and security cannot be achieved. That is why there is the need to support the Government's continued efforts to determine its development priorities in 10 national priority programmes for 10 sectors, as envisioned in the Afghanistan national peace and development framework. The efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in the promotion of peace, reconciliation, dialogue and support for the development efforts of Afghanistan, with full respect for the country's sovereignty, as well as the leadership and ownership of the Afghan Government, remains very important.

Let me conclude by expressing support and solidarity with the Afghan Government in its difficult task of addressing the country's multiple challenges with a view to promoting peace, reconciliation and development. I also wish to express our appreciation to UNAMA for its continued role in support of those endeavours, as well as for efforts in carrying out its mandate under difficult circumstances.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): Let me start by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/783) and his Special Representative Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto for his briefing today.

Pakistan shares the universal concern regarding the grave situation in Afghanistan. The Secretary-General's report highlights the fact that the Afghan people continue to face a deteriorating political, economic and security situation in their country. The Government's inability to control the narcotics trade and arms smuggling is compounding the situation. It is with deep regret that I am obliged to reject the insinuations made by the Afghan Foreign Minister directed at my country. The fundamental sources of insecurity in Afghanistan lie inside the country, not outside. The Afghan Government would therefore be better advised to focus more seriously on its persistent challenges and embark on a path of course correction, rather than blaming others.

The Secretary-General's report refers to Da'esh and its expanding reach in Afghanistan, including in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces. It also talks of its increased influence in the northern and western provinces. These are worrying signs for Afghan security and for regional stability, particularly for Afghanistan's immediate neighbours. As the Afghan Government itself has acknowledged, more than 20 terrorist organizations are operating from its soil, including the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, otherwise known as TTP, and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JUA). Those organizations are conducting terrorist attacks inside my country and pose a threat to Afghanistan's other neighbours.

Wars and turmoil in Afghanistan over the past four decades have afflicted and infected our region with extremism and terrorism. Apart from the people of Afghanistan, it is Pakistan that has borne the brunt of it all. Terrorism, the arms and drug trade and the influx of millions of Afghan refugees have undermined my country's security and retarded our economic growth and development. Pakistan has a vital stake in building peace and security in Afghanistan. We have supported, and will continue to support, all regional and international efforts to promote a peaceful settlement to the internal conflict in Afghanistan.

For its part, Pakistan has fought a very successful war against terrorism. Our military operations, the largest anti-terrorism campaign anywhere in the world,

involving over 200,000 of our troops, have crushed and eliminated terrorist groups in our frontier regions and in our towns and cities. We have paid a heavy price. In all, 27,000 civilians and soldiers have been martyred, 50,000 injured — many of them maimed for life. Our economic losses over the past several years are estimated at $120 billion.

Unfortunately, Pakistan continues to face terrorist attacks from across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, which are conducted by the TTP, the JUA and Islamic State-related groups, operating from sanctuaries and safe havens in Afghanistan. We urge the Afghan Government and coalition forces to take decisive action to eliminate terrorist safe havens in Afghanistan. Pakistan is undertaking steps to strengthen border controls and end sponsored terrorist attacks against my country. We expect the Afghan Government and coalition forces to extend full cooperation in ensuring an end to cross-border attacks from Afghanistan into my country.

The Secretary General has affirmed the strong international consensus that there is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. A peace process between the Afghan Government and the Afghan insurgency must be promoted and fully supported. An intra-Afghan dialogue can succeed only if the Afghan Government itself endorses the global consensus that peace can be achieved only through negotiations and not by the force of arms. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan can play a critical role in forging that consensus in Kabul.

Pakistan also calls upon the Taliban to abandon violence and agree to resume talks in one or more negotiating forums. An agreed de-escalation of the conflict and a negotiated settlement offers the best chance to end the suffering of the Afghan people and to restore peace and tranquillity within Afghanistan and the region. However, as my Prime Minister stated in the General Assembly last week (see A/72/PV.14), what Pakistan is not prepared to do is to fight the Afghan war on my country's soil. We cannot endorse any strategy that has repeatedly failed in the past and would only prolong and intensify the suffering of the people of Afghanistan, as well as further destabilize the region.

We believe that the strategy to restore peace in Afghanistan should focus on the following three elements. First, there must be a coordinated effort to contain and defeat Da'esh and Al-Qaida and their associates, including the TTP, the JUA, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Secondly, Afghanistan must promote a sustained dialogue between the Afghan Government and the Afghan Taliban and other insurgents willing to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Thirdly, effective measures must be taken to prevent cross-border attacks by terrorists and militants travelling from or to Afghanistan.

Pakistan remains committed to extending all possible assistance to our Afghan brothers and sisters, including by facilitating the transit of Afghanistan's imports and exports through our ports, helping with the construction of infrastructure projects through the utilization of the $500 million commitment we made in Brussels and by extending our assistance to the Afghan forces in securing their country. We believe that the meeting last week here in New York between the Foreign Ministers of our two countries opens a window of opportunity to work together to address both security and economic issues to our mutual benefit.

The bonds of religion, culture, history and geography that bind the peoples of Pakistan and Afghanistan are strong and immutable. They will survive the episodes of external intervention and external manipulation. Pakistan has struggled together with the Afghan people to uphold their freedom from foreign occupation and intervention. We strongly support Afghanistan's sovereignty. We strongly oppose its use in games of geopolitical power. While others can afford to orchestrate a proxy war to destabilize Afghanistan and its neighbours, for Pakistan a stable Afghanistan is vital for its own peace, stability and for our progress.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I align myself with the statement to be made later by the observer of the European Union.

I join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his detailed and thorough report (S/2017/783). Let me also thank Special Representative Yamamoto for his dedicated work and Foreign Minister Rabbani, via Ambassador Saikal, for his statement.

Let me also underline the points made by my Italian colleague, especially that on governance, in the

context of our split term in the Security Council in 2017 and 2018.

I will focus on three issues during this debate: security, our commitment and the review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

My first point concerns the security situation in Afghanistan and regional cooperation. We express appreciation for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces; they bear the brunt of keeping Afghanistan safe and secure. The fact that the security situation in Afghanistan is nevertheless getting worse is worrying. We have seen an increase in human rights violations, civilian casualties and the number of internally displaced persons, which are all a result of insufficient stability.

Therefore, if Afghanistan is to prosper, continued work on stabilization is crucial in our view. Stabilization, peace and reconciliation can only be achieved through a political process with committed actors. Being committed entails refraining from supporting elements that hamper the peace process and form impediments to stability in Afghanistan and the region. We encourage advances in the peace process through the greater engagement of insurgent groups in serious and direct peace talks with the Afghan Government. Notably, we commend President Ghani for engaging in talks, notably with the Pakistani Government.

My second point concerns our continuing commitment to Afghanistan. The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains committed to supporting the development of Afghanistan. We make an annual financial contribution of around €60 million, which is focused on the re-establishment of legal order and security, in accordance with Afghanistan's national priorities. We urge the Afghan Government to intensify its efforts in needed reforms and to continue to work extensively with international and national civil society organizations. Such organizations can help to implement those commitments.

Furthermore, the Kingdom reiterates the importance of the inclusion of women and youth in the peace process, which was a point also highlighted by the representative of Sweden. We applaud the inclusion of an additional eight women in the High Peace Council and the establishment of a youth consultation board. Moreover, we welcome President Ghani's personal commitment to gender equality as a top priority for his Government.

That brings me to my third point — the strategic review of UNAMA. We thank the Secretary-General for his substantial report on the strategic review of UNAMA (S/2017/696) and for his recommendations regarding the future of the Mission. We express our deep appreciation of the work of UNAMA and we value the broad United Nations presence throughout the country. A strong presence in its provinces should be maintained. The Kingdom of the Netherlands agrees with the Secretary-General that Afghanistan is indeed not a post-conflict country. Therefore, the first priority for the international community in supporting Afghanistan remains supporting peace and stability. As you just said in your national capacity, Sir, it should be an Afghan-led peace process. Within that context, let me stress the importance of further improving donor coordination by UNAMA. A decisive plan is needed to guide the interaction between donors, United Nations institutions and civil society.

Let me also highlight one area in which the Kingdom of the Netherlands has particular interest, given our own efforts — strengthening the rule of law in Afghanistan. The strategic review recommends the abolishment of the rule-of-law unit within UNAMA. In our view, that should be conducted only if rule-of-law expertise is well integrated into the UNAMA Political Affairs Division. As an integral part of the political pillar of the Mission, in our view, a focus on the impact of rule-of-law projects must be guaranteed.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a long-term partner of Afghanistan — a partner for peace, justice and development. We remain committed to supporting Afghanistan in a decade of ever-increasing Afghan ownership and leadership. In that spirit of partnership, the Afghan people can count on us to stand by their side. During our membership of the Council in 2018, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to support Afghanistan with that same vision, commitment and partnership.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council. Canada thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Yamamoto, for his insightful briefing.

Canada fully endorses the statement of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, but I would add some

additional points. I wish to start by addressing certain key aspects of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) strategic review.

First and foremost, the review highlighted that Afghanistan, as noted by the representative of the Netherlands, is not a post-conflict country. Rather, it is a country in conflict, with few signs of abating. There is also spreading extremism throughout the region, which is supported by criminal networks and income from opium production. In 2017, fighting in Afghanistan has intensified, taking an unacceptable toll on the civilian population. The strategic review also found that population growth and urbanization are contributing to a growing number of unemployed youth, who may be at risk of radicalization. It also found that poverty is increasing and corruption continues to undermine public confidence in the Government. Although there has been significant progress in Afghan women's rights, women remain unequal partners compared to men.

In the light of those challenges, Canada supports the implementation of several recommendations of the strategic review that will contribute to the peace process. For their part, the Afghan Government and the armed opposition, including the Taliban, must engage in peace negotiations. Regional and international actors must also support the common interest in regional stability and the creation of conditions for peace. We also need to continue support for essential services to Afghans, leading to self-reliance and sustainable peace. To support public confidence, it is vital that the parliamentary elections in 2018 and presidential elections in 2019 go forward as planned.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada fully supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. It is my hope that the Kabul peace process will bear fruit and that Afghanistan will soon be free of the level of violence we have seen of late in the country. Furthermore, women's participation in the peace and reconciliation process is essential. The strategic review states that it is essential to continue to prioritize the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the promotion of gender quality and the elimination of violence against women.

Canada commends the decision to move the post of Senior Gender Adviser to the Office of the Special Representative. We hope that this move will support the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and political processes, as well as improve the representation of women in governance structures. If peace, security and development are to take root and endure in Afghanistan, women must join men at the centre of decision-making at all levels of Afghan politics, society and economy.

Finally, I must reiterate Canada's deep concern over the continuing deterioration of security in Afghanistan, especially the increase in civilian and aid worker casualties reported so far in 2017. We are dismayed by that trend. Civilian displacement, increased vulnerability and high civilian casualties are unacceptable. We are particularly concerned about the impact of instability and insecurity of women and children. We look to Afghanistan's neighbours and partners to continue working with the Government of Afghanistan to increase regional stability and decrease violence within the country.

We also want to encourage UNAMA, the Government of Afghanistan, its neighbours and the international community to work even more closely together to ensure the development of basic infrastructure and access to energy. That would make a real difference to the people of Afghanistan, the stability of the region and its security. Canada stands with the Afghan people, especially Afghan women and girls, as they strive for a more secure, prosperous and peaceful future.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Yamamoto, for his comprehensive briefing, and both him and his staff for their tireless efforts.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Afghanistan continues to require our joint and dedicated attention. Germany remains fully committed to its support of the Afghan people, without artificial timelines.

Long-term stability in the region can be achieved only through a comprehensive peace and reconciliation process. We agree with the conclusions outlined in the report (S/2017/696) on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which underscore that the Mission must prioritize political stability and the creation of an environment conducive to reaching an Afghan-owned

peace agreement. Sustainable solutions can be attained only by bringing together all instruments of conflict resolution and prevention in a coherent political strategy. That is in line with the sustaining peace approach and the Secretary-General's current reform efforts, which Germany strongly supports. It has to come together in a coherent, well-coordinated way.

Achieving durable peace is the only way to end the suffering of the Afghan people. When citing the sad statistics of civilian casualties, we must not forget that behind every statistic lies a personal tragedy. Even more needs to be done to protect the most vulnerable in Afghan society. We expect that the national policy on civilian casualty prevention and mitigation will be implemented quickly.

We condemn the suicide attacks on Shia mosques in Herat on 1 August and Kabul on 25 August, which were carried out right before the holy Islamic feast of Eid al-Adha and left over 110 people dead. Those attacks clearly aim to cause division along social, ethnic and religious lines within Afghan society, and we call on all Afghan citizens not to give in to such provocations but to stand united to face terrorist threats.

The Independent Election Commission's announcement to schedule the overdue parliamentary and district council elections for 7 July 2018 is a very important step. The holding of transparent, fair and credible elections is an indispensable component for a peaceful and stable future in Afghanistan. Conflicts need to be resolved in Parliament, not on the battleground. But that can be achieved only when there is trust in the electoral system. Germany stands ready to assist Afghanistan in that process and encourages the National Unity Government to proceed with outstanding electoral reforms.

Let me conclude by reiterating Germany's full support for the crucial role played by UNAMA and United Nations agencies working in Afghanistan. We welcome the results of the strategic review, which seek to optimize the structure of UNAMA and strengthen the Mission even further. We recommend swift implementation. Germany welcomes the decision to retain the UNAMA field presence in Afghanistan, as it is one of the most visible manifestations of UNAMA's and our joint commitment to the Afghan people. Following the withdrawal of the Police Advisory Unit, the Rule of Law Unit and the Military Advisory Unit, Germany trusts that the important tasks of those units will be fully integrated into UNAMA's core activities.

As Chair of the International Contact Group on Afghanistan, Germany especially commends UNAMA's efforts to help strengthen cohesion among international and regional stakeholders in Afghanistan. Germany remains committed to supporting Afghanistan, in close cooperation with the Afghan Government and our international partners, and commends efforts to foster regional and international cooperation in support of peace under the umbrella of the so-called Kabul process.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): We too thank Special Representative Mr. Yamamoto for his briefing and His Excellency Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, for his statement.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2017/783) and his report (S/2017/696) on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

We commend the role played by UNAMA in standing with the Afghan people and in coordinating the efforts of international stakeholders. We will continue to support UNAMA's activities and efforts in that regard.

The achievements of the past 15 years in Afghanistan need to be consolidated. Therefore, the continued support of the international community during the transformation decade is crucial. The international community reiterated its support to Afghanistan in the NATO Warsaw Summit and in the Brussels Conference last year. It is vital to live up to the commitments made towards Afghanistan.

The deteriorating security situation and the presence of Da'esh in the country continue to be a source of concern. We applaud the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces for their determined stance against terrorism. We acknowledge the sacrifices they have made. Turkey will continue to support the Government of Afghanistan in its fight against terrorism and in its efforts to bring peace, security and stability to the country.

We attach importance to the functioning of the National Unity Government. Unity among every

segment of the Afghan society is the key to the success of our endeavours to achieve peace, security and stability in Afghanistan. Further fragmentation of the Afghan society would be detrimental both to the efforts of the Afghan Government and the interests of the international community.

We are pleased to see that the United States new strategy for Afghanistan clearly demonstrates that Afghanistan will not be alone in its fight against terrorism. We are also pleased to note that the new strategy includes prospects for a political settlement, which might include Taliban elements.

Increased cooperation among the countries of the region is imperative for Afghanistan's success. We firmly believe that such cooperation can be secured only through dialogue and stronger engagement. In fact, it is the region itself that has the greatest role, interest and responsibility in establishing and sustaining a secure, prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan.

Turkey will maintain its contributions to the security and development of Afghanistan, as well as its support to the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace efforts. Our support to the Afghan Government's security and development efforts will continue, including through multilateral platforms, such as the Heart of Asia — Istanbul Process.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my appreciation to Ethiopia for convening today's debate, the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan for his statement, and Mr. Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing on the Secretary-General's most recent report, as contained in document S/2017/783.

As the Secretary-General observed during his first visit to Kabul, peace and security remain the challenges to establishing stability and to ensuring sustained development in Afghanistan. According to the Secretary-General's most recent report, the conflict has continued unabated throughout the country. More than 16,290 security-related incidents were recorded during the first eight months of the year, representing a 3 per cent increase against the same period in 2016 and yet another unfortunate highest total ever recorded since 2001. More than a decade after its invasion, Afghanistan, the region and the world are not any safer. I must reiterate once again that deteriorating security in Afghanistan has deeper roots and cannot be addressed solely through military build-up, as some suggest.

The Taliban and the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant — Khorasan Province continue their heinous attacks on the civilian population. They are reinforcing, recruiting and undertaking complex attacks, such as the attacks on a Shia mosque in Herat on 1 and 25 August that killed over 90 and 28 people, respectively or the August attack in Sari Pul province in which at least 36 people were killed. Like in Herat, the majority of the documented casualties were Shia.

The proliferation of terrorist groups in the Afghan territory necessitates a concerted international effort on counter-terrorism. The world needs to deal with this increasing threat in a comprehensive manner. The international community needs to sustain its support for the Afghan National Unity Government and to help the Government in its fight against terrorism and extremism, as well as in its efforts to address the complex security, political, economic and development challenges it faces.

Our support for the Afghan National Unity Government is unrelenting. We welcome any achievement on the path towards an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process, leading to lasting and comprehensive peace in the country and the region. Iran is indeed very eager to see a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan as its neighbour; security in Afghanistan directly and indirectly affects security in our borders and the region. It was in that context that Iran welcomed and participated in both the Moscow and the Kabul peace conferences this year, and continues its participation in the meetings of the Heart of Asia process as an active member.

Strengthening our regional cooperation with Afghanistan is a priority and a major pathway towards consolidating peace and economic development and stability in the region. The Trilateral Chabahar agreement between Iran, India and Afghanistan and the Khaf-Herat railway project are two major transit projects under way. We are confident that these projects have the capacity to change the regional economic perspectives of Afghanistan. Such regional infrastructure initiatives can serve as an important path towards development and stability in Afghanistan.

We also continue our active role through mechanisms such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. During the reporting period, we restarted negotiations on our bilateral comprehensive strategic cooperation agreement with the Afghan Government, which aims to improve cooperation in the areas of security, the economy, refugees, culture and education. The first meeting of five technical committees was convened in Tehran to discuss all issues.

On anti-narcotics efforts, we see any increase in narcotics as a reflection of the prevailing insecurity and poverty. Iran is a frontline country in the war against narcotics, we have offered alternative cultivation and alternative livelihood plans to dissuade Afghan farmers from cultivating opium. Stronger international cooperation and support, and the commitment of donors, the Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are essential to deterring the menace of narcotics as a social health challenge and, more importantly, as a major source of income for the recruitment of extremist and terrorist groups. In that regard, we underline the positive impact of strengthened regional cooperation and joint responses to countering illicit drugs and transnational organized crime.

Iran has hosted hundreds of Afghan refugees for more than three decades. They have access to mostly subsidized services that are equally available to Iranians, including basic commodities and public services. This year too, 100,000 Afghan children, regardless of their or their parent's legal status, were able to enrol in our schools. By the decree issued today by the Supreme Leader, no Afghan child in Iran, not even an illegal immigrant, should be deprived of education, and schools must enrol them.

We also continue to participate in the work of Tripartite Commission in order to plan for the voluntary, safe, dignified and gradual repatriation of Afghan refugees. Success in voluntary repatriation will depend first and foremost on providing for the reasonable needs of repatriated refugees in Afghanistan, and underscores the need for more international support. Stronger coordinated approach between the Government, donors and the United Nations and an overall strategy for addressing the combined needs of the displaced and returnees are crucial in making the repatriation of Afghan refugees more successful.

We support UNAMA and United Nations agencies in their efforts to provide development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan through a genuine commitment of the United Nations to a sustained partnership with Afghanistan. We need to utilize the UNAMA mandate and its good offices to strengthen national institutions and capacities in priority areas, as requested by the Government.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): I thank you, Sir, for organizing this debate on the situation in Afghanistan and for providing us with an opportunity on an issue that forms a very important part of the peace and security debate in the Security Council. We thank Ambassador Yamamoto for his reflections on the current situation.

We were happy to hear the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan address the Council earlier today. We welcomed Mr. Rabbani in Delhi earlier this month for the second meeting of the India-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Council. For India, strategic partnership and friendship with Afghanistan are an article of faith. Ours is not just another relationship or engagement, but a spiritual and civilizational connect. As a friend of Afghanistan, India supports Minister Rabbani's appeal to the international community to support his country in strengthening the gains made by the Afghan people over the past 15 years.

On its part, India has just launched a new development partnership with Afghanistan. We will begin implementing high-impact projects all across Afghanistan using the fresh development assistance of $1 billion announced last year. We will focus on building infrastructure for socioeconomic development, enhancing the capacities and capabilities of institutions of governance, and promoting the skills and capacities of human resources. We welcome and support the announcement by Minister Rabbani of Afghanistan's candidature for the Human Rights Council elections to be later this year. The worst violations of human rights are caused by terrorism, and the people of Afghanistan have endured that for too long.

We have taken note of the report (S/2017/696) of the Secretary-General on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We have also noted the reflections of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and welcome his findings, especially those on the political aspect of the Mission in Afghanistan. Further, we welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General

to address the shortcomings in the functioning of UNAMA, which remains the biggest special political mission of the United Nations in any country. We hope that it will strengthen the supportive role of the United Nations so as to enhance its performance in all areas of its mandate. This work must be implemented with regular consultations with the Afghan Government. We look forward to consulting with relevant actors in that process and to assisting in it whenever required.

While undertaking our collective efforts here at the United Nations or at other multilateral settings, we must be mindful to support the strengthening of Afghanistan's sovereignty and stability, which are the two things that anti-Government terrorist elements are trying to undermine from their safe havens across the borders of Afghanistan. What Afghanistan needs is not prescriptions but support for its efforts. The people of Afghanistan should decide what they need and what they want to do. Whether they relate to Afghanistan's political and military engagement with its partners or to the differences in its political establishment, the solutions and the approach must be driven by the Afghans and by Afghans alone.

The situation in Afghanistan has remained particularly painful and disturbing, with the security situation worsening and visible signs of that the gains made by the international community and Afghan people are being undermined. The incessant attacks on hospitals, schools, funerals, international development agencies and diplomatic missions are a matter of serious concern. The multiple crises that have been inflicted on Afghanistan have made Afghan territory attractive for criminal and terrorist groups, which are well connected to international terror and criminal networks. These groups are stealing the resources of Afghanistan, which ought to belong to the people of the country. The international community's first and foremost duty is to ensure that the forces of terrorism and extremism do not find sanctuaries and safe havens anywhere and at any level. We must not differentiate between good and bad terrorists, or play one group off against the other. The Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Al-Qaida, Da'esh, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and others of their ilk are all terrorist organizations, many of them proscribed by the United Nations. They should be treated like terrorist organizations, with no justifications offered for their activities.

We support Afghanistan's determination to overcome its security challenges, and the willingness of many in the international community to effectively deal with the issue of safe havens enjoyed by the terrorist organizations that pose a threat to the region and beyond. For its part, the Security Council must act on the funds that the terrorists in Afghanistan are generating through their illicit activities. In that regard, we would like the Council to consider how the sanctions regime established under resolution 1988 (2011) can be utilized also to leverage progress in the peace process. These are significant instruments and must be utilized to their full capacity.

We once again thank you, Mr. President, for your efforts and look forward to more such opportunities to be able to help our Afghan friends in their endeavour to find peace and stability in their land.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wilson: (Australia) welcomes the recommendations of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) strategic review, on which I will focus my comments today. The review points the way to making the United Nations effort in Afghanistan more strategic, agile, coherent and focused. The international community has spent much of 2017 reflecting on the effectiveness of its approaches in Afghanistan and made some significant adjustments to emphasise the primacy of getting to peace.

While noting the implementation challenges, Australia supports proposals to restructure the work of the United Nations Mission under political, development and human rights pillars to better enable UNAMA to pursue its ultimate goals of sustainable peace and self-reliance in Afghanistan. Australia calls on the wider United Nations family in Afghanistan to work constructively and coherently towards enabling and participating in that vision.

Australia supports an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process. We encourage Afghanistan to continue its efforts, with support from the United Nations, to build the conditions conducive to peace, including political consensus and inclusion.

Regional countries have a crucial role to play in supporting any peace settlement, the benefits of which will ultimately accrue not just to Afghanistan but to its neighbours as well. The review's observation that the international consensus that drove early success is fraying should move us to renew our commitment to

securing peace in and for the region. We encourage our friends in the region to prioritize long-term strategic stability over short-term tactical advantage.

Australia commends the proposal to retain a significant UNAMA field presence. We emphasize the importance of field offices for outreach, programme implementation and visibility, particularly on human rights concerns and early warning, including of emerging humanitarian needs. More broadly, we support a more prominent role for the United Nations in strengthening donor coordination to better align assistance with Afghanistan's priorities and improve oversight, coordination and coherence.

Australia welcomes bringing the Senior Gender Adviser under the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, thereby reflecting the centrality of reaching for gender equality across all lines of effort. Supporting women's empowerment has been a core mission of the Australian aid programme in Afghanistan since 2002. Our ending violence against women programme supports services for women affected by violence, access to justice, community attitude changes and advocates for women's rights. Earlier this year, our Prime Minister announced the $30 million women and girls empowerment package, to fund phase 2 and continue to support Afghan children, predominantly girls in rural and remote areas, to access basic education.

As per the review, Australia recognizes the significant work of United Nations agencies and their staff in Afghanistan and thanks them for their close cooperation as development and diplomatic partners with reach into parts of the country and access to diverse stakeholders critical for Afghanistan's future. We encourage all United Nations agencies in Afghanistan to work together cooperatively to fully implement the UNAMA review.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Dabouis (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 28 member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/783), as well as Special Representative Yamamoto for his briefing. I would also like to thank and Minister Rabbani for his statement.

(*spoke in English*)

As stated on several occasions, the EU strongly acknowledges the crucial role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and all the United Nations agencies in supporting the Afghan people, encouraging peace and reconciliation, monitoring and promoting human rights and in coordinating the international community's assistance. The European Union remains fully committed to supporting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process. Such a process must include all Afghan men and women and must preserve Afghanistan's unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and the equal rights of all Afghans under the Constitution.

The EU supports the Kabul process on peace and security and other international efforts to establish a genuine Afghan peace and reconciliation process. The Kabul process can also encourage further discussions between Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries to increase regional cooperation. We encourage the Afghan Government to engage in a political process with the Taliban and other Afghan opposition groups to reach a lasting political settlement. We also welcome all initiatives to create a conducive environment for such a process and call on all parties to engage in constructive solutions.

On 24 July the joint communiqué adoped on elements for an EU strategy in Afghanistan set our vision on how the European Union can support Afghanistan. It focuses on four priority areas critical to achieving progress in Afghanistan, namely, promoting peace, stability and regional security; reinforcing democracy, the rule of law and human rights and promoting good governance and women's empowerment; supporting economic and human development; andaddressing challenges related to migration.

The joint communiqué follows the Conference on Afghanistan held in Brussels in October 2016, the signing of a new EU-Afghanistan cooperation agreement on partnership and development in February 201 and the appointment of a Special Envoy to Afghanistan in June this year. Next month, the Foreign Ministers are expected to adopt the actions proposed in the joint communiqué. In that context, let me also

refer to the new United States strategy on Afghanistan and South Asia. As in the past, the European Union will continue to work together with the United States and the international community in support of lasting peace, security and stability in Afghanistan.

Ensuring respect for human rights and the holding of democratic elections continue to be a focus of all EU actions in the country. An EU-Afghanistan high-level meeting on human rights took place in Kabul on 14 August, with more than 80 participants. The meeting highlighted next steps to be taken by the Afghan authorities to advance on the protection of human rights. Human rights will from now on be part of the structured dialogue between the European Union and Afghanistan under the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development.

With regard to elections, the EU and its member States welcomed the announcement by the Independent Election Commission of the date for the parliamentary elections in Afghanistan, to be held on 7 July 2018. Joint efforts will now be deployed to make these elections possible on that date in a democratic, inclusive, transparent and credible manner. There is still a lot to be done; in particular, key decisions on electoral reforms have to be taken and implemented by the Afghan authorities in a timely manner. The EU and its member States remain committed to supporting the Afghan electoral process. Recently, the EU adopted a €3.5-million project to strengthen Afghanistan's electoral institutions, which complements the existing and future European Union electoral assistance in Afghanistan.

Joint State-building and development efforts in Afghanistan need to build on reinforced regional cooperation to address both the common threats of terrorism and common sustainable development challenges. In this regard, the EU strongly supports such regional forums as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan to facilitate cooperation among all regional actors.

Migration continued to be a very important subject in our discussions with the Afghan authorities. The EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward on migration issues, complemented by bilateral EU member States arrangements with Afghanistan on migration, is producing good results and we need to continue to jointly pursue and enhance its implementation. Our comprehensive dialogue with Afghanistan includes addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement and ensuring the sustainable reintegration of the returnees. Assistance in this field was strengthened in the past two years with measures to facilitate the sustainable reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons, socioeconomic cohesion in host and return communities, and the strengthening of the Government's capacity for migration management and fight against human trafficking and smuggling. Since last year, approximately €200 million have been made available to help Afghanistan tackle the challenges related to migration and forced displacement, including with regard to the regional dimension of the situation of Afghan refugees.

In July, UNAMA reported that the number of civilians killed and injured in the Afghanistan conflict during the first six months of 2017 persisted at the same record high levels as last year. Extreme harm to civilians continued amid a worsening toll from suicide attacks and a greater impact on women and children. We call on all parties to do their utmost to protect the civilian population, especially women and children.

We also need to continue to protect the vital role of humanitarian agencies and respect their impartiality and humanitarian space in addressing the most urgent needs of the most vulnerable. In view of the threat posed by the many mines and improvised explosive devices to the population, the European Union also encourages Afghanistan to maintain their current demining rhythm.

(*spoke in French*)

To conclude, the European Union continues to consider UNAMA as a key partner in achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan. UNAMA has an invaluable role to play in ensuring the broadest possible international support for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process. The European Union will continue to support these efforts with all means at its disposal. In that regard, and as already announced, I note that the newly appointed Special Envoy of the European Union to Afghanistan, Mr. Roland Kobia, has taken up his post. His main task will be to promote the regional consensus for peace and to advance the European Union's contribution to the security, stability and development of Afghanistan and the region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium aligns itself with the statement just made by the observer of the European Union. On my part, I would like to highlight the following points.

It is now more crucial than ever to ensure that conditions are conducive to stability and dialogue, and we welcome the efforts made by the Afghan Government to that end. Furthermore, we believe that the regional actors should demonstrate their commitment to peace in Afghanistan and translate these commitments into concrete action.

We welcome the recommendations of the strategic review, which once again underscore the coordination of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) between the various international donors and the Afghan Government. Belgium will closely follow the way in which this recommendation is implemented in practice.

Belgium hopes that the legislative elections will take place as planned in an acceptable security environment and with a satisfactory rate of participation, particularly with regard to women as both voters and candidates.

It is important to ensure that the work carried out by UNAMA takes into account the developing commitments of international partners. The ultimate goal of such partnerships should always be peace and stabilization in Afghanistan, which are the necessary preconditions for the well-being of the Afghan people.

Lastly, I would like to touch on the situation of children in Afghanistan. Three armed groups, as well as the Afghan National Police, are listed as having recruited children. The detention of children is also of concern. As for the Taliban, they are guilty of carrying out attacks on schools and medical facilities. We call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and encourage the Government to intensify its fight against impunity in the case of violation.

To conclude, I reiterate Belgium's support for Afghanistan and its Government, as well as for UNAMA.

The President: The representative of Afghanistan has asked make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Rabbani (Afghanistan): What we heard earlier today from the representative of Pakistan was but another attempt to divert international attention from its open and explicit support for terrorism and violent extremism. All of us here today are well aware of the security dynamics in Afghanistan and in the region, and I should therefore not have to go into great detail about Pakistan's long-term and long-standing use of terror and violent extremism as an instrument of foreign policy.

The main factor for insecurity in Afghanistan therefore relates directly to the export of violent proxy groups into Afghanistan from within Pakistan. As we stated last week before the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.6), these facts have been verified by various members of the international coalition present in Afghanistan. It is on this basis that Afghanistan has called on the Security Council to take specific action in defence of the Charter of the United Nations.

With all that Afghanistan and Pakistan have in common, as beautifully outlined by the representative of Pakistan, we are keen to see genuine and comprehensive State-to-State discourse on peace, security and prosperity. We hope to see constructive engagement rather than a continuation of the all-too-familiar plausible deniability and various attempts to change the narrative through fake and distorted images, facts and figures. This kind of behaviour will bear no fruit for peace. The policy of deception has no future. Pakistan should instead seize the opportunity to reverse course and choose the path of adhering to the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: The representative of Pakistan has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Usman (Pakistan): We regret that the Afghan Permanent Representative has yet again chosen to criticize Pakistan for its internal problems. We reject such insinuations. Pakistan will not assume the role of scapegoat for the failures of other countries. We call upon the Afghan Government to work with the Government of Pakistan in the same spirit of the recent meeting held for our two Foreign Ministers in order to address security and economic challenges in a mutually beneficial manner.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.